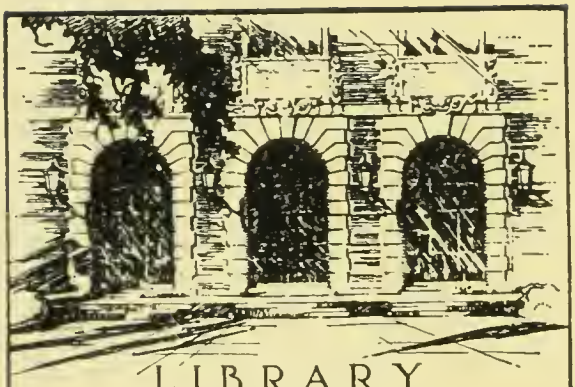

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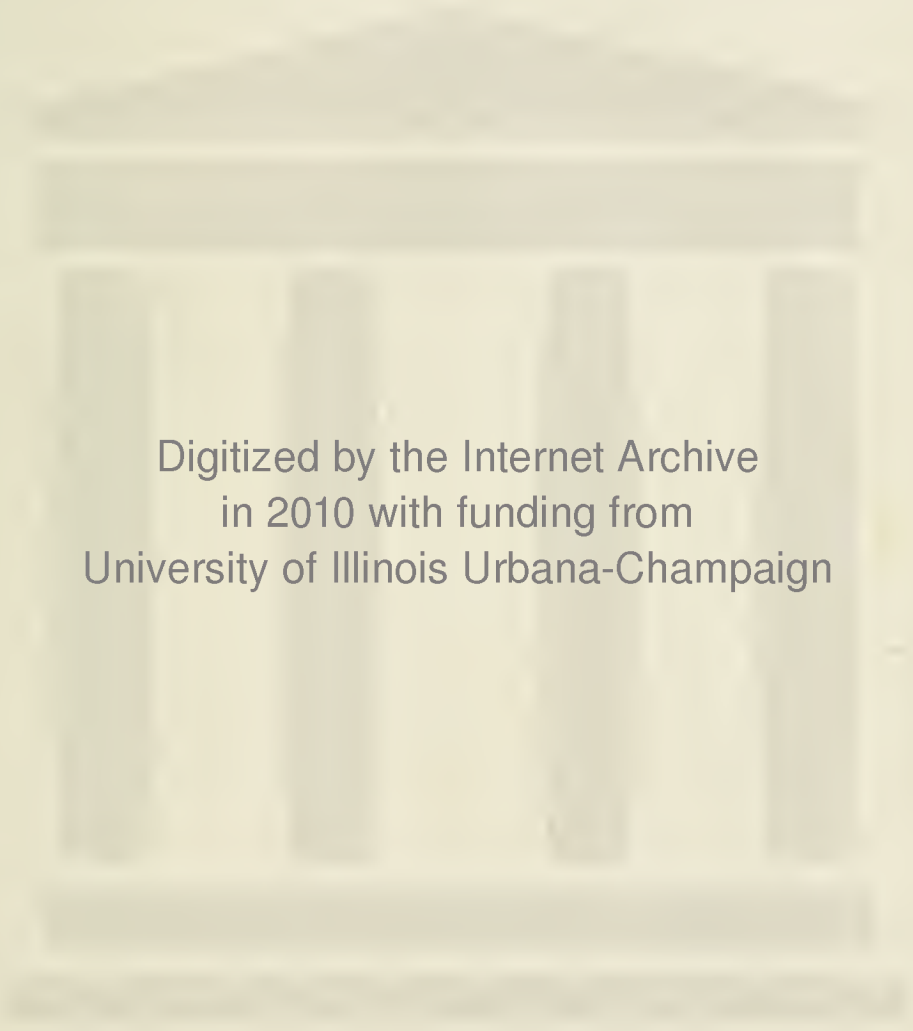

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WOMAN'S DEVOTION.

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A NOVEL.

"I meant the day-star should not brighter ride,
Nor shed like influence from its lucent seat;
I meant she should be courteous, facile, sweet,
Free from that solemn vice of greatness—Pride;
I meant such softest virtue there should meet,
Fit in that softer bosom to abide;
Only a learned and a *manly* soul,
I purposed her; that should with even powers
The rock, the spindle and the shears controul
Of Destiny, and spin her own free hours."

BEN JONSON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
SUCCESSORS TO HENRY COLBURN,
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.
1855.

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WOMAN'S DEVOTION.

CHAPTER I.

Frank and Nest exerted their utmost powers to soothe Lady Jane, who was not, however, to be soothed; and after finding that Frank did not intend to pursue the fugitives, but, on the contrary, meant to have Augusta's settlements properly arranged, and every other thing done, as if the marriage had been solemnized in all proper form, she desired they would speak no more to her on the matter, and above all, that

Augusta's name was not to be mentioned in her presence.

And so, in a short space, matters went on much as usual at Gomer; for Augusta had not made herself so much beloved that any one in particular missed her.

Lord and Lady Gomer had to return the visits of ceremony they had received; and when the carriage and four was ordered, with the outriders, Lady Jane might be seen in it, in duenna-like guard over her young daughter-in-law.

Thinking it necessary (as she intimated) to accompany the poor little girl, she being quite unaccustomed to such scenes; and by this means driving Frank into such a series of suppressed rages, that poor Nest was devoutly thankful when the visiting was over.

But to such people as fubsy Mrs. Armstrong, the quiet, amiable Mrs. Clifford, and those who were within walking distance, they were visited by Lady Gomer, with no other as-

sistance than her husband's arm, while Lady Jane sat at home in her boudoir.

It was a sad mistake, though, on her part; for while Lady Jane was guarding the out-posts with unflinching zeal, Nest had taken the citadel by a coup-de-main, and was enshrined as their good angel in the hearts of the Gomer people, before she had been two months among them.

"I find from my maid," said Lady Jane, one morning, "and also from Mr. Malcolm, that you two young ladies are in the habit of visiting the cottages and poor people about here. I thought you understood, Amelia, that I never allowed such a thing."

"Yes, mamma," said Mimi.

"Then you will oblige me, by remembering my wishes for the future."

"Yes, mamma."

Now Lady Jane had not yet arrived at openly ordering Lady Gomer, as she did her own daughter. But she was most anxious to do so; and nothing but a little mistrust as to what

might be the result, and a little fear that Nest might not be quite the child she would fain please herself by thinking she was, alone deterred her.

She was in the habit, to Frank's most intense disgust, of asking Nest if there was any thing at table she did not like, or any thing that she did in particular ; and if she could, by any amount of questions, obtain from Nest an opinion, she would immediately harangue all the servants, and beseech them pathetically to remove the obnoxious dish, or implore them, in moving terms, to remember Lady Gomer had always her favourite dish brought to her.

Nest could not move without Lady Jane, in officious eagerness, asking her what she required. Should she ring the bell for her? Could she order any thing that would please her ? Was she sure she had a comfortable chair ? &c. &c.

Sometimes Nest laughed, sometimes she took no notice ; but she knew full well, this

officious patronage was meant but for one purpose. She was perfectly aware that Lady Jane's intention was to prevent her being mistress of her own house, by giving her the attentions due to a young and childish visitor.

Nest had set out on her hard task of conciliating her mother-in-law, with the determination to be firm, but gentle. She was, however, going too far; besides, Frank could not be held in much longer, and should he break forth, there would be an end to all conciliation. So, just about the time that Lady Jane had come to the determination of advancing a step or two, in her plan; Nest was waiting the opportunity, to show, without any angry feeling, that she was going to be mistress of her own house.

On this memorable morning, Frank being away, Lady Jane determined to made a *coup d'essai.*

"I do not approve of young ladies, especi-

ally of your rank and station, going into low, dirty cottages, and mixing with the common herd," said Lady Jane.

No answer from any one.

"Neither does Lord Gomer," continued her Ladyship; "he considers with me, that, in justice to herself, a lady should be one, and hold herself intact, and above the multitude. Do you hear, my dear?"

"Meaning me, mamma?" said Nest.

"Yes, I mean you; in fact, I meant you to consider my observation to Amelia, as also addressed to yourself; and I shall require from you the same promise she has made."

"Mimi, of course, obeys her mother," said Nest; "my obligation to do so, has yet to be told me."

Lady Jane grew dark, but she had gone too far to recede.

"Do you mean to say that you will disobey my orders?"

"I should like to comply with your wishes,

when I can do so; but Lady Gomer receives no orders, save from her husband."

"I told you that he disapproves of your doings as much as I do; and, in stating my orders, I am but fulfilling his wishes"

Nest rose, and for the first time since she had been in her own house, rang the bell, and before Lady Jane had time to anticipate her delivering her own order to the servants, said simply,

"Be so good as to tell my Lord I wish to see him."

"This is a new feature in your character," said Lady Jane bitterly; "I thought so much gentleness was but assumed, and that the headstrong will would soon appear."

"Nay, mamma," said Nest, gently, "think not so. I only wish you to learn from Frank that he has changed his mind, and that I have not only his permission, but it is at his request, nay, even accompanied by him, that Mimi and I pay our visits to the cottagers."

"Then that is quite enough for me," said Lady Jane disdainfully; "if he is so weak and foolish as to be turned by a child's whim, thank God, I am different. I may with justice say, that no one can accuse me of vacillation. I say a thing, and keep to it. But I hear his step; and as I feel myself quite unable, after your extraordinary display of temper, to encounter his, equally irascible and childish, I shall retire to my own room; where, in spite of all their ingratitude and want of affection, my sole time is taken up for my children's welfare."

When Frank entered, he found Mimi skipping over the chairs in wild spirits.

"Oh! Frank, Frank, I wish you had been here; Nest has given mamma such a snubbing—it was the best thing I ever saw."

"Oh! no, no, Mimi," said Nest, deprecatingly; "don't look at it in that light. Your mother wishes me to forget that I am anything but a child; and I merely put her in mind that I was your wife, Frank; and you

will see that we shall do much better, now the ice is broken between us."

"I am heartily glad you have asserted something, Nessy; I could not have borne her conduct much longer," answered Frank.

"Oh! it was glorious! she took her down with such a little queen-like air; mamma looked like an ugly rat," said Mimi.

"Oh! hush, hush, Mimi, you are so naughty to-day, really I cannot love you. Now, dear Frank, if you will only be forbearing, I do not doubt but that we shall all get on very well together, during the time your mother remains."

"I will put faith in you, Nest; certainly we have never had so peaceable a time, that I remember, before."

Lady Jane brooded over this scene with greater bitterness than sense; for the more she thought thereon, the more she was goaded to resume the battle for power with her daughter-in-law.

Utterly unable to understand that humility,

which, founded on religion, raises its possessor to the uppermost seats, and gains him honour and repute, where the proudest and haughtiest fail, Lady Jane could not understand Nest's character.

As happily gay and affectionate as if nothing had taken place between them, Nest met her mother-in-law, whose lowering brow, and haughty manner, showed the sting yet rankling in the wound.

Such apparent forgetfulness could proceed from nothing but childishness; and though a vision just flashed mentally before her, of the slight figure assuming so dignified a manner, the radiant eyes looking so determinately full upon her's, she determined to attempt another *coup-d'essai.*

They were all three working in the rose-garden; Mr. Wilson, the steward, examining, with Lord Gomer, the building, house, and the plans; Nest and Mimi marking out walks; Reuben digging a bed; and Maggie weeding:

when Lady Jane appeared, Alphonso, the proper one hundred steps behind her.

"I trust," said she, to the two girls, "that you are not wasting too much money on this patch of ground, young ladies. It ill becomes you to waste, with carelessness, what I save for Lord Gomer with such unwearied diligence. But whom do I see there? That wretch Reuben, and that vile woman! Alphonso, call Mr. Wilson here."

"Pray, Mr. Wilson" (as soon as he approached), "may I ask by whose unparalleled effrontery I see those people in my grounds?"

Mr. Wilson, being utterly confounded and confused, was hesitating about a reply—when Mimi cried out—

"Frank's the wretch, mamma."

"Miss Gomer, I beg you will walk into the house, if you can conduct yourself no better. Pray, did you not inform Lord Gomer of my express orders concerning these people?"

Feeling that between the two, one must be master, Mr. Wilson found voice to reply—

"Yes, my lady, I have told my lord everything you wished me; and it is by my lord's express orders that they are employed in this garden, for my lady."

"Indeed!" said Lady Jane; "and pray, Mr. Wilson, allow me to ask, how you dare allow such doings, as I see now going on, without my permission? Especially when you know the sum of money that will be wanted for my conservatory."

"Really, my lady, I—really—" stuttered Mr. Wilson, who held Lady Jane in a sort of nightmare horror,—"it's my lady's garden; my lady's rose-garden."

"Yes, mine, mamma," said Nest, coming to his relief; "I gave all the orders; Mr. Wilson is only obeying me."

"And can you suppose, for one moment, that I shall suffer Lord Gomer's pocket to be

picked in this manner, for the foolish whim of a rose-garden?"

"Pardon me, my lady," stammered Mr. Wilson, "it's nothing to do with my lord, it's my lady's garden; her ladyship's rose-garden."

"Pray, mamma, think no more about the expense; Mr. Wilson is right in saying it is my garden; you forget that I am an heiress," she continued, smiling; "I am spending some of my riches in this rose-garden, and these are my work-people; and that is going to be my cottage; and poor Mr. Wilson has got nothing to do with it whatever. He only came to tell Frank about some sale. I have an agent of my own, and this is going to be so completely my own, that I shall not even let Frank come here, unless he is good."

"I do not in the least understand what you are saying," said Lady Jane, who having forgotten all about Nest's riches, and being at a

loss what to say, fell back upon incomprehensibility, as many wiser people have done before her.

"It is very easy to understand, mamma," said Mimi; "Nest is spending her own money on her garden, so you can take all Frank's for your conservatory."

"Impertinent girl! Alphonso, my smelling-bottle. I suppose, my dear" (for she never would call Nest by either of her names), "you are aware what strong and very proper objections I have against those two people I see working in this garden?"

"No, mamma."

"Mr. Wilson will tell you my objections; and I shall be obliged by your dismissing them."

"I employ them at Frank's desire, mamma."

"Then, of course, I shall speak to Lord Gomer;" which she did, to such purpose, that he utterly lost his temper; and she, cool and sarcastic, pursued her walk, rejoicing in the

fact, that though she could not move the gentle Lady Gomer to retaliate on herself, she had made her shed bitter tears over Frank's intemperate language.

CHAPTER II.

"WELL!" said the Duke to the party assembled at Nairn, paying that portion of their visit which had not been fulfilled—"my mother and I are thinking of coming over to Gomer, to take lessons in the art of family love. Here you all are, looking so healthy, lively, happy, rosy and cosy; Lady Jane has almost lost her one wrinkle, and I have not heard her snap at poor Malcolm above twice this evening."

"Oh!" said Nest smiling, "we are not so

dull as all that, we have our little disputes, just to add zest to our lives."

"Yes, that we have," said Mimi, "and the other night we had such a famous scene; I only wish you had been there, cousin."

"Now, Mimi, be good, and don't tell tales," said Nest.

"Oh, but this was such fun," said Mimi, imploringly.

"And I do so long to hear it," said the Duke, adopting Mimi's tone.

"And I will be so good, Nessie. I will tell it so kindly," pursued Mimi.

But Nessie would not be persuaded; so, like two wicked things as they were, under pretence of some great business, they got away together, and Mimi told her story.

"You know how angry mamma gets every time Frank goes to York, on magistrate's business, and county business, and all those things, you do; you know, cousin, Nessie makes him go. Mamma would be madder

than ever, if she knew that. I think I'll tell her some day."

"Go on, child," said the Duke.

"Well! cousin, Frank was to be away two days, because of the assizes. You were there too, were you not, cousin?"

"Go on, child."

"Well! then you know what old Malcolm is, when there's no gentleman to keep him in order. He came into the drawing-room, so fresh, that he went up to Nessie, and called her 'lovely creature,' and some other nonsense. Mamma was not there, you know."

"Wretch!" muttered the Duke.

"He was very ridiculous to us both, and I was ready to die of laughing at his nonsense and Nest's horror. Oh! cousin, you should have seen her. If he had been a toad in the small pox, she could not have looked more disgusted."

"Animal!" again said the Duke.

"A beast he always is, I think," said Mimi.

"However, mamma came in, and though he still continued paying Nest all sorts of compliments, and being very disagreeable, mamma would take no notice. I think she rather enjoyed seeing Nest so put out."

"Mimi, if you do not go on, I cannot wait the end of your story. An irresistible impulse moves me to think of a horse-whip."

"Well! cousin, I am going on; but how angry you are; your eyes quite flash. So at last Nest went up to mamma, and said, 'Will you request Mr. Malcolm to leave Mimi and me alone?' "

"And pray, my dear, what is he doing to annoy you?" said mamma, in her grandest style.

"You must be aware, mamma," said Nest, "that his conduct is very disagreeable to us both."

"So far from being aware of it, I think

he is particularly kind in talking to two silly, giggling girls."

"Lady Jane! Lady Jane!—but go on, Mimi," said the Duke. "Frank was away, was he? What happened next, child?"

"Nest rang the bell with the air of an empress, and said, when it was answered, 'Take tea to my boudoir;' and merely inclining her head to mamma, was proceeding out of the room, when her ladyship jumps up with her fiercest air, and says—

"'I shall allow no such thing, Lady Gomer. I will not have Mr. Malcolm's civilities treated with such disdain.'

"'Good night, mamma," said Nest; 'had that gentleman not been your husband, he should have left the house to-night instead of obliging me to leave your company!' and so she vanished, and in the storm that followed, I happily escaped after her."

"Ah, well!" said the Duke; "that's well, but how went on matters after?"

"Oh! she is so good and kind, she treats the animal just as if nothing had happened. And he really did not know what he was about, and has been quite different ever since. But mamma has been like a slumbering volcano until now."

"I think I shall go and ask Nest what she thinks of that fellow."

"Yes, do, and you'll see how kindly she will speak of him, and not say one word about his atrocity."

"So, little sister, you are taking very kindly to us all, I think now," said the Duke, some little time after.

"I ought to do so," said Nest, smiling, "every body is so kind to me."

"Mother kind? eh!" said he.

"Pretty well, I cannot expect she will accord me the affection she bestows on so few."

"And Mr. Malcolm? eh!" again said the Duke.

"Oh! I don't think we care much for each

other; I don't quite understand all he says, and so he thinks me rather simple. I wish you would tell me what a 'brick' means."

"I would oblige you directly, if you would only ask me properly."

Nest looked into his eyes, assuming gravity, while smiles lurked beneath.

"If you please, Elmore."

"Then, little sister, a brick means a brick, I suppose, that you put in a wall, and build up in mortar."

"No, that is not the meaning, for he said I was a brick."

"Did he, indeed! monstrously civil, I dare say he meant to be, and I should like to horse-whip him for his impudence. Did he call you any other pet name?"

"He said I was a muff too, because I would not understand him."

"Confound his impudence! Have you told Frank?"

"No, Elmore, for you know Frank is so

hasty; and not knowing what they meant, I thought I would ask you. Not that I imagined the knowledge of great importance, but it is as well to know if one ought to resent such terms."

"Brick means praise, and muff means the reverse; and whenever he uses either term to you again, just order him out of the house, or tell me, and I will come and help him out, vulgar idiot. But you are going away?"

"Yes, Frank promised my dearest granny that I should visit her twice a year, and we start next week, and I may take Mimi with me."

"God reward you, for the pains you take with that poor neglected girl, little sister."

CHAPTER III.

Nest had need of change. Her spirit, pure and intellectual, could not always strive in a mean warfare of rivalship with another. She felt corroded with earth's cares, and she pined to bathe her soul in the gentle springs of religious piety and fervour, that flowed from her grandmother. She longed to raise her heart and mind once more to the contemplation of the wild grandeur of her native home; and from them it seemed but a short way, to look to the beneficent, all-seeing, all-powerful God. She felt bound and tied down, with meannesses

and littlenesses that chafed her soul to think of, much less feel.

She would say to herself, "I said I could live and suffer for him, but oh! Lord, let me keep my soul free; burden me not with mean thoughts, and vile passions. Give me grace to do my duty, but let me walk pure and undefiled, through my allotted path."

It was quite impossible for any one to define the sort of evil-impregnated air that seemed to surround Lady Jane, wherever she went.

And the vexed soul all the time was conscious of no extraordinary evil, or talent, or sense that would account for the influence she exercised.

She was weak, silly, and vain. When the fortress of her pride was broken into, she had nothing but pride wherewith to repair the breach.

But the secret was, she never flagged. Say you gained a victory, and stormed the citadel, making a wide breach, ere you saw her again

she was intrenched in double walls, the breach fortified in adamant. She was unchanged, and you had to commence afresh, wearied and tired with the worldly warfare; the enemy, nerved and watchful, gaining fresh strength, feeding on the wounds of his defeat.

Nest's grandmother, always a woman of deep religious feeling, had with age and the world's misfortunes, so purified her spirit, that the atmosphere around her, breathed more of Heaven than earth.

Nest throve and expanded in such genial air, yet

> "Strove not to wind herself too high
> For human lot, beneath the sky."

And now she panted to freshen her weary spirit, strengthen her relaxed sinews, and free herself from the thick mouldy smell of earth.

Besides all this, she had another secret care. Her Frank, her noble, high-hearted, generous

Frank, for whom she was ready to die daily, was he not the possessor of a passionate temper, wayward as it was intemperate? When with her quiet firmness, her gentle determination, she had achieved a victory, and soothed her mother-in-law into the loving path to which she was longing to bring her, would not Frank, in a whirlpool of wrath and long-suppressed indignation, undo her labour, and drive them all far back into the thorny, bristling road?

It is true, he would be so penitent; it is true, he wrestled and fought with the fiery spirit; it is true, that, curbed and subdued, it sometimes slept. Nevertheless, his wife knew too well it lay there; that a mocking laugh, a scornful inuendo from his mother, brought it into fierce life again. And more than all, she felt assured, that with life, life only, whether her own or others, would Lady Jane give up the only thing she cared for, her rule and sway in Gomer Castle.

She had need then of quiet calm, and the

blessing of holy religion, to nerve her to the task that was coming.

Mimi's delight was unbounded: she had never been so far from home; she had never seen the sea; she was to be away one whole month, without the prospect of seeing either her mother or Miss Croft, which was a boundless source of happiness in itself. But above all, she was to be with Nest, and her Frank. She was to live in nothing but an atmosphere of love and sunshine. And even if her spirits had not been in a flutter before, the reception that was given them by Nest's own people would have brought on a crisis. Poor little Mimi, all unaccustomed to the melting mood, found herself alternately laughing and crying, with emotions so new to her, she could hardly tell if intense pleasure was the cause that made her wet her pillow that night with tears.

And she enjoyed them—they seemed, to her, luxurious tears.

"I knew," she soliloquized to herself, "I knew she was an angel. When she first looked at me with those large lovely eyes, and stood in the doorway in her white dress, speaking to me in a voice so like a soft sighing wind, I felt a good spirit was near me. How they love her; how they crowded round her; kissing her shawl, her dress, worshipping her very foot-steps. I did not understand many of their words; but their cries of joy, their tears of delight, ah! I shall never forget them. If I am ever so wicked, or grow up like mamma, this scene coming before my eyes will make me good again. Poor mamma! I feel sorry for her; I wonder if she ever felt as I do to-night, so intensely happy, with my heart so full; I feel good, and could die at this minute calmly. And that beautiful old lady, if she could only stand up, how majestic she would be. And the servants, all so anxious to get one glance, have one kind word; but how they fell back, that none might interrupt the first view, none

might come between her and her Nest, when she first entered the house; and that solemn, not to-be-uttered welcome—it seemed as if her spirit went to the throne of God, to thank Him for letting her see her darling once more, before she would permit herself one embrace. This good, angelic Nest, how could she leave these people, that adore her, doat on each hair of her head, for us, who have never appreciated her? I love her, but is it with the love and veneration of these people who know her so well? Frank loves her, beyond his life; but can we either of us understand her noble nature? I think one does, amongst us all. I have seen my cousin's eyes follow her with a strange, lingering, longing look; and he is so careful of every word that falls from her lips; he is so noble himself, he judges of her by his own standard. What would he have said, at Nest's welcome among her own people? He would have felt like me, in this strange excited state, and perhaps, like me, prayed to God to

bless her, and preserve her long to the fortunate people who now possess her. And I must pray yet another prayer—May God make me worthy of such a companion, and give me the power to profit by her, and the heart to love her."

Thus rose the first spontaneous prayer to God that ever had issued from the heart of the neglected girl.

And almost at the same moment her brother was folding his Nest in his arms, and while he whispered in her ear, the thanksgiving that was no stranger to his lips, since she had been his own Nest, there arose also his first mental petition to the Throne of Grace.

"Render me, O Lord, worthy of the gracious spirit you have given in my keeping, that I may learn the true and right way to worship Thee, and do my duty to my fellow-men."

Coadmore was a long, old-fashioned house, lying on the sunny side of a wooded hill, basking in the earliest morning light, and yet gor-

geously tinted with the dying glory of the setting sun. At no time of the day, when the sun did shine, were its rays turned from the house; and this was the more extraordinary, as Nature seemed to have emptied her lap, of every hill she could collect, into that particular region. The bare brown Snowdon, with its two peaks, the curious, finely-cut Rivals, the rounded dumpy sheep-hills, the peaked and wooded knolls, all were here, in every variety and shape.

The house itself consisted of a large hall, which was entered by glass doors, beneath a long pillared portico. Each wing consisted of a conservatory, both of which opened, on the western side, into a large bow-windowed drawing-room, and on the eastern side, into a dining-room, similar in shape. This room looked on a garden, cut out of the solid rock, gay with flowers, and curious from its unique appearance; the bare rock finely contrasting with the velvet turf. The hanging ferns, periwin-

kles, and ground-ivy, picturesquely adorning its naked surface, deriving nourishment and health from little sparkling gushes of water, that in various places issued from between them, all uniting in a rough fountain of rock-work, in the centre.

The drawing-room windows overhung the hill, and looked straight down on to the vast and boundless ocean, presenting an ever-varying landscape of changing beauty.

"Do you know, Nessie," said Mimi, "I do not now wonder at some things in your character that I could not understand. In the first place, it is a great relief to my mind, to find that nice Miss Williams here. It has always seemed a blot, to me, in your character, leaving your granny, whom you said you loved so much, all alone."

"But you see, my going and leaving her all alone, happened to be very beneficial to the nice Miss Williams; she has now a home, which she had not before," said Nest. "But,

Mimi, if it will be any relief to your feelings, I would not have left my granny alone—I would have resisted Frank and all his attractions."

"I think you would, Nessie; but now you may be quite happy, for though Miss Williams is not you, she seems next best; and the next thing that is cleared up in my mind is, that with such a scene before you, as this boundless, heaving, glittering, life-like sea, no wonder Gomer seemed in your eyes a mean mortal thing, built up by man's pigmy hands, the invention of his still more pigmy brain."

"Why, Mimi, you are grown quite poetical, and become heroically ecstatic."

"I feel—I feel—now what do I feel? At this moment, I envy no one, not even you; do I not see that glorious sight, for the first time, with full-grown eyes, full-grown capabilities of enjoying it? I think I am an object of envy to all those who have been accustomed to it from childhood. Only one thing is true—

I cannot find words to impart my feelings. They are too large, great, grand, for my little weak mouth to utter them. But I feel a new life within me, Nest, brimful of good purposes, and I like to feel it."

CHAPTER IV.

THEIR lives passed only too quickly. After this wise, Nest spent all the morning with her grandmother, while Mimi, escorted by Miss Williams, roamed about on Welsh ponies, up hill and down dale, to the manifest satisfaction of both. In the afternoon, Mimi was quite prepared for another excursion on foot, in company with Frank and Nest, and was then introduced to that memorable cavern, which was the first original cause of the reader being troubled with this history. Not that Nest favoured Mimi with a rehearsal of the scene itself;

such an important person as Lady Gomer, was not to go skipping about like little Miss Herbert, of Coadmore. However, Mimi was sufficiently delighted with the scenery, to excuse any thing further.

Sometimes, Frank went away for a couple of days; for the often-mentioned slate-quarries were undergoing a visitation from sundry legal gentlemen, preparatory to their being let, when the amount of money that would be likely to fall into Nest's lap, was of fabulous extent.

On one of these occasions, after having spent some hours on the sea-shore, the two girls returned home, and found the venerable grandmother seated in her sunny corner, in the rocky garden as usual, but with a benign look of pleasure beaming all over her.

"My granny," said Nest, "what have you been about? you seem to have had some great pleasure."

"I have had a visitor," said the old lady.

"Who, pray?"

"I do not know, I never saw him before."

"But what is his name?"

"That I cannot tell, my pet."

"Then how came you to be so pleased with him, my granny?"

"Why should I not, my love?" said the old lady, smiling.

"Yes," said Mimi, "that little prude wants to see a person through and through, before she will own to thinking about them. Now I feel like granny; if I like a person, it is at first sight."

"Prude, indeed! you naughty Miss Mimi. What shall I do to you, for being so pert?"

"Sit down, and let us hear what granny has to say about her visitor."

"Well, granny, what made you look so pleased and happy?"

"Because I liked my visitor, Nessie. Though I am an old woman, very old, yet still I am a woman, and liable to have my weaknesses, and fall in love."

"Quite right, granny," said Mimi; "don't be jealous, Nest.

"But I am very jealous, granny; what was he like?"

"The handsomest man I ever saw."

"There, Nest; go on, granny."

"The most courteous gentleman I ever met with," continued the old lady.

"Ah, ah! Nest; well, granny."

"He looked, he walked, he talked, like a noble of the land."

"Delightful!" continued Mimi; "and what did he talk about?"

"He was entertaining, witty, sensible, and eloquent."

"Now, granny, how can you plague your poor little Nessie with all this nonsense? It is Frank, he has returned sooner than we expected."

"No, it was not Frank, handsome as I think he is; my visitor was altogether quite different from him."

"Why did you not keep him here for us to see?" said Nest.

"Because he would go and take a walk, to see the beauties of the country. But do not be disappointed; he returns to dinner, and will remain here some days."

"And yet, granny, you don't know his name," said Nest, quite puzzled.

"No, my little one, and I never thought to ask it. There was a fine noble look about him, such a grand, yet frank, hearty way, that I seemed to know him quite well; and he was as friendly and kind to me, as if he had known me all his life."

"Now there is no one in the world that answers granny's description, but Elmore," said Mimi; "suppose it is he, Nessy, just come to surprise us. It is so like him."

"I dare say it is, granny, the Duke of Nairn; he is quite like what you describe as your visitor," said Nest.

"How glad I shall be if it is," said Mimi;

"he is the only person I have been wishing to have here."

"My pretty one, if you ask me my opinion of his rank, I have no doubt he is a Duke; at all events, if not a Duke, he must be a King," said Mrs. Jones.

"Granny is really quite infatuated," said Nest, pretending to pout.

In the meantime, the dear granny's visitor had not proceeded far on his walk; for, a quarter of a mile from the house, he had seated himself on a sort of ledge, from whence there was a precipitous descent down on to the beach, and a wide expansive view all round.

He was talking to himself.

"That old lady is one of a race one rarely sees now. There is a masculine depth of character in her, which is seldom joined to such feminine delicacy. She certainly was a fitting instrument to guide and direct, and educate that girl. A strong-minded female I detest. Well—I have wandered from home, and found

myself here, as I knew I should, and for what purpose? Man! take your heart out of your bosom, and look well at it, that you may see if a black spot is in it. Once in your life before, when verging between man and boy, you gave this heart into gentle keeping, such as you knew would bless, cherish, and love it. It rested well content; it drank in large draughts of happiness and joy; it surfeited itself with anticipations, such as enter but once into a youthful heart. At the height of its boundless rejoicing, death came, and this heart was bereft of its keeper. It lay exposed to the pitiless storm of grief, lacerated with wounds, panting with groans of sorrow, and was restored, withered and bruised, to the bosom from whence it was first taken.

"And years passed by—ten years—yet still this heart bore its wounds, all unhealed and unknown.

"Lately, there hath crossed a vision before

the eyes of this heart—holy, pure, noble—such a being, as, gifted with Heaven's balm, would have healed the wounds, filled the withered space, made the flowers to grow, and the birds to sing, in the lonely path of this heart.

"But it is not to be; this lovely vision is sent to another than thee, O heart! she can never be thine; therefore, answer to thyself—what brought thee here? Hadst thou base motives, or pure ones?

"I look at you, oh! my poor heart, so withered and forlorn; but I see no vile speck, no black spot. You come from a love of the good and beautiful; you come to certify to yourself, that the lovely vision is what she seems, brought up as thou imaginest she was, loved as thou knew she deserved; good as thou hoped her to be; and so, having satisfied thyself, oh heart! thou wilt return—return to thine own home, to watch and help, for thou knowest how the sweet vision will need thy kind care, thy watchful guard, to shield her; and her

heart's chosen one from the evil nature that is even now plotting against them."

"Oh, heart! return to my bosom, and thank God that thou canst do thy duty."

"It is, it is—I knew it must be by the firm tread, and tall figure," said Mimi, bounding out of the glass-doors. "Oh! cousin, cousin, I am so glad to see you; I have wished for and wanted you every day, because I knew how delighted you would be with everything."

"Pray, may I take the liberty of asking who is addressing me?" said the Duke, taking off his hat, and bowing.

"Now, how nonsensical you are, just as if you did not know it was me," said Mimi, blushing under his stedfast and admiring gaze.

"I am prepared for all sorts of extraordinary things in Wales," continued his cousin; "but, if you are my little cousin Mimi, the Welsh air is the most wonderful beautifier I ever saw. But I do not think you are

Mimi; she always favours her unworthy cousin with a salute."

"I was going to kiss you," said Mimi, throwing herself impetuously into his arms, and kissing him a dozen times," only you looked so strange at me."

"Well, little sister, when I am freed from this mad girl, who I feel is really Mimi, I shall be glad to be welcomed to your Welsh eyrie. I suppose you don't indulge people with such salutes as Mimi gives."

Nest was holding out her little hand with the greatest eagerness; but she drew back, blushing at this remark.

"Nay, nay," said he half sadly, "don't be alarmed; I won't take any advantage of my brotherhood. I only meant to insinuate, if Mimi's welcome was at all infectious, I am quite in a mood to submit to more of it."

"You make me quite ashamed of my cold welcome, dear Elmore," said Nest, blushing still more deeply. "Pray come in, as

Mimi says; we have longed for you often; and of all the people in the world, does my grandmother wish to know you most."

"Ah! you see, you are too late to introduce us. I am already 'full fathom five' deep in love with her."

"And so is she with you, cousin," said Mimi, "my stars! if she has not been going on about you."

"It is mutual, quite mutual," said the Duke; "but while I look at you, child, may I ask what you have been doing with yourself?"

"As how, cousin?" said Mimi.

"As how? why, growing so pretty. Here is a nice tall, straight figure, a blooming, rosy face, a fair clear skin, such laughing blue eyes, and such shining curls. Do you know, Mimi, you are going to be a beauty."

"Well, if you say so, cousin, then I must be getting pretty, and I am very glad of it; and I am still more glad, that, however pretty I may be, I can never be like mamma."

"Ah! I see you are Mimi, naughty still."

"But, oh! cousin, I am getting so good. Nest, I see, is gone; so oh! cousin, I have such lots to tell you. If you could only see how the people love her here, and how good she is, and what good she does, and her grandmother, cousin, they doat on each other, and the happiness of this place; but I never can tell all I have to say, in one day."

"Well! child, I know something about it. I have been wandering here for three days, among Nest's people."

"Oh, cousin!"

"So I am ready to enter the lists with you, in enumerating facts; but now let us go in to my charming old lady; I long to be making more love to her."

As the Duke of Nairn laid down to rest, that night, he said, "Cheer up, my heart, you have happy work before you, to help this bright creature through her wayward path of life.

But she would not let me kiss her. I think, heart, it would make me feel more brotherly; but no, from her secluded life, her want of male relations, and her blushing way, that fair cheek has been pressed by none but a husband's lip, and so it shall remain pure, for me."

CHAPTER V.

The month is over; with heavy hearts and tearful eyes, adieux are spoken, farewells given, and the trio are approaching home. Happy faces in the village meet them, the new schools seem almost finished, the children run their legs off without any cause, and shout themselves hoarse with glee. It is clear all is well in the village, all their plans progressing, and prosperity beginning to be felt there. The good old vicar is standing at his gate, waving his hat, and shouting his welcome, as if he was the smallest boy in the parish.

The servants meet them delightedly, and remark, with apparent pleasure, that no one is at home, all the company being out in the grounds. So, without staying to inquire what company, they run delightedly over their home-rooms, and feel so snug and happy, they might almost be at Coadmore.

However, there is a tap at the door. "Lady Jane's compliments, and begs to know how Lady Gomer feels herself after her journey? and my Lord Gomer is to know, there is company to dinner at seven o'clock."

"My Lady Gomer sends her love to her mamma, and she is very well after her journey, and will be down to dinner at seven o'clock."

"Now did you ever know such an odd woman as mamma?" said Mimi; "she cares no more for us than old boots."

"But who is here?" said Frank.

"Sir John and Lady West, my Lord," said Nest's maid, Seaward.

"What, Augusta!" said Mimi; "I must

run and see her; how came she and mamma to patch it up so suddenly, I wonder?" So Mimi went off to see her sister.

"I am very glad they are reconciled," said Frank; "and though I dislike West, I shall feel very glad to welcome him, for my sister's sake; and who besides, Seaward?"

"My Lady Julia Elmore, my Lord."

"The deuce she is!" said Frank, his brow flushing; "how dare that woman come into my house, I wonder, after her insolence?"

"Hush, dear," said Nest, looking at the maid, unpacking; "do you know I am rather pleased she is here; I am going to amuse myself, with giving her a dose of Miss Jones."

"She is an insufferable bore," said Frank, still irate; "I shall just give my mother a piece of my mind in the morning, and tell her, I will not have people I dislike in my house, without my leave. And let me see, Nest, how you are looking; she will pull you to pieces, I know."

"Dear Frank, she may, if it pleases her. My impression of her is, that she is too silly to care about much; and I think I can punish her for what she said of Miss Jones, if you will give me leave."

"Give you leave! I shall only be too glad to see you do it. But, it being time to dress, I will leave you; and mind, Seaward, you exert your best talents in adorning your Lady."

"Yes, my Lord; and would your Lordship desire her Ladyship to wear her pearls, my Lord? she will look quite a queen in them."

"Very well; I wish it, Nest."

"But I think the turquoises you gave me would be better."

"No, no; I'll have the pearls."

"Thank you, my Lord," said Seaward, curtseying with great unction.

Lady Jane had employed the month of her children's absence in arranging a notable plot, for the furtherance of which, she had made friends with her daughter and Sir John, and

had also invited her sister. There were other people in the house besides, including a remarkably beautiful girl, the sister of Sir John.

The Lady Julia had, with the lack of sense peculiar to her, besought her sister not to bring her much into contact with Miss Jones. Her nerves were not strong; and they were always particularly irritated when in the company of low, vulgar people. In fact, she did not think she could have brought herself to the pass of sleeping under the same roof as Miss Jones; but that a dawning was breaking in her mind, her intended spouse was getting more diffident than ever, and required a little encouragement.

She had, therefore, arrived at Gomer Castle with the full intention of insulting Miss Jones, and bringing her matrimonial matters to a final conclusion.

The Duke and Duchess were to be there that evening; and to show how sincere she was

in her wishes to encourage the diffident Duke, she had fastened on him the moment he entered the room, and was in the act of saying, "You know I will go through being introduced to Miss Jones; for Frank's sake, I will endure that; but afterwards, you know"—and here she shrugged her little thin white shoulders contemptuously, when the door opened to admit our three travellers. The Duke gave one glance at Miss Jones, and then looked at the Lady Julia, over whose countenance flitted every wave of wonder and confusion, to his great amusement.

Nest had acquired some little confidence after six months' marriage, and therefore assumed the air she knew so well how to adopt, that befitted the high-born lady of a great mansion. Her dress was white lace, faultlessly fitting to her figure; her splendid hair was plaited in two large plaits, which turning broad and low round her ears, were brought high up

in the form of a coronet round her small head, giving a peculiar queenlike dignity to her appearance.

The dear little grandmother's pearls, her sole ornament, and a beautiful flush upon her cheeks, made Nest a sight to look at.

Even the Lady Jane was amazed at her appearance, and almost equally surprised at Mimi.

With easy grace Nest welcomed her guests, and then advancing to her mother-in-law, held out her hand, and in her clear sweet voice, said, "Ah! mamma, how do you do?" and all this with so much happy grace of manner, so little of the child, so much of the courtly, high-bred woman, that Lady Jane was confounded confused, and awkward, and could hardly reply to either Nest's welcome, Frank's hearty shake of the hand, or Mimi's muttered, "How do, ma?"

But the Lady Julia was still wrapped in bewildering amazement.

"Rather pretty, isn't she?" said the Duke at last.

"How, who, what's pretty?" gasped Lady Julia.

"Why, Miss Jones."

"Ah! yes, Miss Jones; I understand. My dear Elmore, I think it is necessary, surely, where is Lady Jane? How very remiss in her, not to introduce me to my niece. Dear me, and so that is Lady Gomer, my niece; what a lovely creature; what an air. Where is Jane? I ought to be introduced; surely, Lady Gomer knows her aunt, Lady Julia Elmore, is here in the room."

"I really don't know; I am not sure she knows she has an aunt at all," said the Duke.

"Dear, dear! well, perhaps not. You know I had no idea; Jane is so very peculiar, she tells me nothing. I had not the least idea my niece was such a lovely creature; I thought she was a Miss Jones. What manners, dear,

dear, what grace; I must be introduced. I long to embrace my niece. My dear Elmore, do oblige me; Jane has quite forgotten me. Do introduce me as her aunt; I claim some little attention from my niece. I am proud of her, very. Pray introduce me."

"Now, Nest," said the Duke to himself, as he handed up the Lady Julia to introduce, "if you don't treat this foolish woman properly, I'll not forgive you in a hurry."

"Lady Gomer," said he aloud, "your aunt, the Lady Julia Elmore, desires an introduction to you."

The Lady Julia was ready to spring into her new niece's arms, and embrace her before the whole company; when Nest, drawing herself up, in a manner as haughtily dignified as Lady Jane herself, made the Lady Julia a low, deep, distant curtsey, and then turned completely away.

"Good, Nest," said the Duke to himself.

"Well, I declare," said Lady Julia, quite

mortified, "she made a curtsey fit for court. Did you tell her, Elmore, I am her aunt? how very negligent of them not to tell. She does not know, pray go and explain."

"I don't think explanation will do any good; she evidently meant to snub you. Did I not hear something about a letter you once wrote to Frank, commenting in peculiar terms on a Miss Jones?"

"I did, my dear Elmore; I did, you are right, Frank has told her. But I did not know, how could I tell really what a charming creature she is. What dignity. Though I was hurt at her curtsey; did you ever see one performed so gracefully? quite fit for court. Lovely creature indeed, I am really quite charmed with Lady Gomer, my niece: I shall write to all my friends. I have not seen such perfect manners any where, no—not even at court. I must really go and remonstrate with Jane for her extraordinary forgetfulness."

But Jane was in no mood to listen to her,

or any one; she had been so busy, during the month of their absence, in arranging a well-concocted plan, of bringing the obnoxious daughter-in-law into what she considered her proper place, that she had lost sight of anything like failure in the matter. She had forgotten the effect of Nest's first appearance on herself. And now, with renewed beauty, with matronly dignity, dressed with such rich elegance, in one short five minutes, Nest had overthrown half her plans, and gained an important member of them to her own side. She saw full well the effect of her beauty and manners on the Lady Julia; she saw she lost nothing by the haughty distant curtsey, with which Nest met her advances, nay, that she rather gained by it. But nevertheless, nothing of this was so galling, so utterly disgusting, to Lady Jane, as the sight of those pearls. The Gomer pearls, looking so lovely in hue and shape, as they lay on that matchless neck; that only single trophy, that the poor little simple

grandmother had gained from her imperious daughter-in law. They were, then, absolutely in the possession of the despised Welsh girl, who wore them with an air, as if they had been fished up out of the sea solely and wholly for her use. They looked as if part of herself, and she seemed a matchless pearl, ornamented with those of more ordinary shape and hue. Rage entered her soul, and hate began to creep in, under its shroud; for Nest, with gentleness, but still with the air of the lady of the house, said, "Pray, mamma, will you kindly perform your usual duties, and take your usual seat?" She marshalled her guests mechanically into the dining hall, and under the mingled influence of mortification, spite, and rage, (mortification at being patronized by her daughter, feeling that she occupied her present seat only on sufferance from her,) she managed, with considerable difficulty, to get through the dinner without exploding.

"I don't think you were quite right," whis-

pered the Duke to Nest, "in giving up your proper seat; you began beautifully, and might have won the day altogether, had you marched straight up there with me."

"Oh! but, Elmore, I feel sorry for her."

"Well, she does look rather like Nettle, my bull terrier, when she has missed a rat."

"Oh! hush; besides, I like so much sitting by Frank."

"Ah! I thought you were wholly good, but there is a little self at the bottom of some of your doings," retorted he; "but I am very proud of you to-night, little sister, you have done your part very well; and as for your beauty, as granny says, God's work is very fair. I am glad to see the Gomer pearls have got their eldest sister to wear them. I never pay compliments; but, Nest, you look to me to-night like a vision one sees but once in one's life in a dream. If I was Frank, I should be rather proud of you."

"If he is not, he ought to be, we will

suppose," said Nest, laughing and blushing; "but how came you here? you ought to be sitting by Lady Jane."

"I beg your pardon, my duty, as head-man, is to take in the lady of the house. If Lady Jane will put herself into places she has no claim to, it is her fault. My mother has been very particular in educating me, according to the strictest rules of etiquette, and I am such a good boy, I never forget what my mamma teaches me. You have taken Lady Julia's heart by storm; she thinks Miss Jones was some nightmare, sent to punish her, for dreaming too much about me. Now, you laugh; I assure you, though I am an humble, modest man, she is always dreaming about me, and tells me her dreams too. I don't mean to say she is in love with me, the man; but she is violently smitten with the Duke of Nairn, and means to marry him."

"Oh! Elmore, how absurd you are."

"It is really true. I have, however, a few

slight objections, and I think my dear mamma may treat me to a scene à la Jane, if I weakly give way. But see that poor little Mimi, looking at us two, so merry here, as if she was an unfortunate dove, in the clutches of a hawk. Jervois, take my compliments, and ask Miss Gomer to do me the honour of a glass of wine."

CHAPTER VI.

The rest and peace which they enjoyed at Coadmore, while it imparted fresh strength and resolution to Nest, had quite the contrary effect on Frank and Mimi. The very difference they felt was aggravating, and the remembrance of the past pleasures in their quiet sea-bound home, only goaded them to resent the disagreeable incidents of their stately mansion. And Lady Jane was beginning to discover, if she wished to make any impression upon Nest, either for a good or a bad purpose, it must be through Frank or Mimi. Slights towards her-

self, cutting speeches, sarcastic remarks, were all met by her daughter-in-law with sweet good humour. But touch the two she loved, loved all the more for their wayward, but still noble and generous dispositions, she became the stately lady, and through her command of temper, gained victory after victory over the irascible Lady Jane.

Things could not go on in this manner; Lady Jane pondered over her plans for many a day, unable to fix upon anything that she could with safety hope, would have the desired effect. In fact, her sense and talents were by no means equal to her daughter-in-law's; and these received additional vigour, from pure love being the motives that actuated Nest.

And what sharpens every capability, increases every talent, nerves every feeling, like love?

Lady Jane felt with anger, impotent anger, that she was no match for a character like Nest's. Quiet but watchful, dignified yet gay, clever yet humble, sensible but full of child-like happi-

ness; even Lady Jane herself, was not insensible to the charm of a character like this. When alone, when pondering over the vexations she made her suffer, and the slow but seemingly sure victory she was achieving, hate, undoubted, naked, bare hate, was the only feeling she had towards her.

Yet, when in her company, there was something so sweet and bewitching, so lovely and so engaging; she caught herself often, following her movements, words, and steps, with eyes and thoughts of uncontrollable admiration. She was conscious also, that whenever Nest addressed herself, there was a peculiar gentleness in her manner, her sweet voice seemed like flute notes, and those exquisite eyes, so large, so deeply grey, so radiant in pure sunshine of heart, they assumed that beseeching, tender look, which had so struck her upon her first introduction.

And when she used that one sweet word, "Mamma," it seemed to linger on her tongue

with persuasive love, expressing the heart's desire, "Oh love me, mamma."

The better spirit was striving for the victory in Lady Jane's bosom,—we must leave her with it. But, oh, Lady Jane, beware, resist its soft pleadings, turn away from that path of peace and holiness that he would lead you into, and remember your doom.

"Then he returned with seven other spirits, more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there. And the last state of that man is worse than the first."

CHAPTER VII.

The Lady Julia, like most people of small brains, when an idea entered her head, had room for none other, consequently she had neither eyes, voice, or ears, but for her new niece. As Mimi said: "If aunt Julia was a man, she would go to Frank and say, 'Give me up that woman, she is meant for me, not you.'"

Whatever affronts she might have put upon Miss Jones, the Lady Gomer was amply repaid.

"My dear niece, I observe you attend church regularly," said she.

"Yes, Madam."

"Pray, do not call me Madam, I am your aunt, and I assure you I am proud of my niece; really now, I approve of her, I like her. And it is very few that I find worthy of such notice. You may call me aunt always, my dear niece."

"Thank you, aunt Julia."

"You have certainly faultless manners. Where were you brought up, niece? Paris, or any of the continental capitals?"

"None at all, aunt Julia; I have never been abroad in my life."

"Singular! very singular. But now about church. I observe you never fail to attend church. I admire it in you, my dear niece, being so regular; I wish I could do the same; but really until they have separate churches for us and the common people, I cannot go; particularly in a country church. I declare, positively, in a country church, you may have your servants seated in the very next pew. Now, how can you bear that, my dear niece?

You smile; but I am far from being irreligious myself; in fact, I have been lately thinking a good deal about it, Puseyism is so fashionable. But I never can get over our being all huddled into the same place, with no other separation from the vulgar crowd, than a board."

"But we are all the same in the eyes of God, aunt Julia."

"No, my dear, not at all; you are mistaken; I can set you right, from the Bible itself; it says, 'There are many mansions,' meaning in heaven."

"Sufficient for us all, dear aunt; but the meek and lowly are to be exalted, God is no respecter of persons, His grace is offered freely and fully to all, from the king to the beggar."

"You are earnest, my dear niece, very earnest, and have certainly the most lovely colour. However, I do not see it in your light. I cannot, I don't pretend to argue; but I feel certain there must be a different Heaven for people of

our rank and station. But have you studied Puseyism ?"

"No, aunt."

"Perhaps then, you are a Noelite, or low Church, or some other kind of sect?"

"No, dear aunt, not that I am aware of."

"I am glad of it," said Lady Julia; "for I can assure you, if you are inclined to be religious, which is very fashionable at present, be a Puseyite; I thought at one time I would take it up, but really it was rather too much for me, such constant church-going, and remembering the saints too; the bell was always going, and I was told it was some saint's day. It was a great deal too much. They ought to have put two saints together, like Simon and Judas; made twins of them, then that would lessen a great deal of church-going. When you were last with me, Jane, don't you remember how wearied we were with that everlasting bell?"

"Yes; I consider it all very well for the poor people, but I do not see why we are to pray

and listen, as if we were sinners. I always consider reading the commandments quite a work of supererogation. There should be separate services for rich and poor. What are the commandments to us? how can we break them?" continued Lady Jane.

"Oh! mamma," said Nest, so deeply hurt, that the tears filled her eyes.

"Then pray tell me, my dear, how I can break the first commandment?"

"Oh! mamma, you may acknowledge no other God, pray to no other; but should He not have our first love, our first service? If we withhold this, or bestow it on any of His creatures, some dear friend—a husband for instance," continued Nest, blushing deeply, "or on riches or pleasure, do we not make that creature our God? do we not break the commandments?"

Lady Jane looked puzzled, and after a moment's silence, said:

"You take a strange, exaggerated view of

these things, my dear; but now about the second commandment?"

"That you know, mamma, the Romanists break."

"And the third; we cannot break that at any rate, for we never swear."

"But when we use His name lightly in our exclamations of joy, wonder, or sorrow, when we pray to Him with our lips only, when our hearts are far away, do we not take His name in vain then?"

"You have, certainly, most extraordinary ideas, for such a child as you are," replied Lady Jane, uneasily; "but at least, you even cannot say that we have broken the sixth; unless, indeed, you call killing flies and wasps, and such things, murder."

"I don't know upon what grounds you call my niece, Lady Gomer, a child, Jane," began the Lady Julia, hotly; when Lady Jane interrupted her with—

"Well, well, my dear Julia, never mind just

now ;" then turning to Nest, she continued triumphantly, "Now, my dear, you have not yet answered my question, how can I possibly break the sixth commandment?"

"Ah, mamma," murmured Nest, "does not the Bible say, 'He who hateth his brother is a murderer?'"

"I perceive you are a Methodist, a very unfortunate thing, and I must really prevent Amelia being so much with you," said Lady Jane, angrily.

"Then I shall be a beast," said Mimi, abruptly, "and I conclude it's better to be a Methodist than that."

"Leave the room, Amelia ; really, where you imbibe such manners and words, is a wonder to me."

"You ought to let her be a great deal with my niece, Lady Gomer," said Lady Julia, who never saw beyond her nose ; and, indeed, if she had understood the implied taunt, would have thought her sister mad to think thus of the

manners she thought so perfect. "But," she continued, "I would rather you were a Puseyite, my dear niece."

"I profess to be neither Methodist nor Puseyite, dear aunt," said Nest. "I would wish to be religious in no extreme. The more simple and pure religion is, I trust the more acceptable to God. I find no particular advantage arise to the heart from a constant observance of ceremonies and duties; for I would wish my heart to be always filled with such love and gratitude to God, that it may act independently of any form. Neither do I wish to parade and make common that innermost chamber of my thoughts devoted to God, by dragging my religion into every conversation or company, whether fitted for it or not. I desire to worship God in spirit and in truth, not in vain show or form; neither to lower Him by familiarity, or to act as if no thought of Him dwelt in my heart. Excuse my sermon, dear aunt, but you brought it on yourself."

"I like to hear you talk, my dear niece, and I like what you have said. I wish, I really wish, Jane, you and I had had a few religious advantages when we were young."

"Pooh!" said Lady Jane, and left the room.

"Ah, poor Jane, yes, she has a vile temper. It is a wonder to me how you can live with her; I never could. North and south are not more different. You are aware how very ill she spoke of you, before you were married, and all for nothing. Pure ill-temper, which I always tell her, is such a sign of ill-breeding. But I have a great opinion of your sense, my dear niece, so I will get you to do a little commission for me. Jane is of no assistance, and really it is a delicate matter, for a person of my rank and quality to have to do, without the assistance of some female friend. You know the Duke, of course. He seems to like you; in point of fact, he and I think alike on many matters, and we thoroughly agree about you, my dear niece. Do you notice that he looks pale, and a leettle out of spirits?

Ah, you did not; that is because you are not accustomed to him. Well! he is very much out of spirits, rather out of health too, a little consumptive, I should think. Well, I am the cause, my dear niece."

The Lady Julia drew herself up, shook her skirts, and took out her pocket-handkerchief; all which exertions produced a little flush on her cheeks, and passed well enough for confusion. She was a remarkably pretty woman of five and thirty, and without being so regularly beautiful as Lady Jane, her appearance always created a certain degree of admiration. To be sure, her long devotion to celibacy, or pining for the Duke, had given a spareness to her form, and a little acerbity to her looks, that the more ample proportions of Lady Jane did not show, spite of her five years advantage in age.

Nest looked amazed.

"It is true, my dear niece," said Lady Julia, with the utmost simplicity; "I am the cause. He loves me, and I have hitherto been, not ex-

actly unkind, but I have been reserved. You know it was proper that I should be so, born in the sphere I was, and he not inheriting his title through direct descent. But I am afraid I have been hard upon him, poor Elmore; and besides, time is really getting on. It is, however, so delicate a matter, that I hardly know how to proceed in it, and yet he is really too diffident. I wish him to be told that my reserve is over, my objections are removed; that if he comes forward, I will not recede; that when he offers, I shall not refuse. Nay, that he has only to ask me to name the day to become Duchess of Nairn, and I will do it. Now, my dear niece, will you do this?"

"I think, aunt, he will deem it strange and impertinent of me."

"Not at all. And pray, see how extremely fortunate—there is my aunt coming now in her pony carriage, and he is driving her. Really, what a magnificent room this is! How fortunate that we saw their coming. I shall go and

meet my aunt, and tell the Duke you are waiting for him here. That will be an excellent method of opening the business. I shall tell him you want him on a very delicate matter."

In vain Nest tried to get in a word, to express her decision not to interfere; the Lady Julia was gone, without hearing her. And Nest, rather than be left there to perform her bidding, made her way through an opposite door into the conservatory. Not, however, before Elmore had caught a glimpse of her; for he lost no time in obeying Lady Julia's wishes, being really alarmed at the extraordinary wording of her message.

"My little sister," said he, advancing quickly, "what is the matter? any thing between you and Lady Jane, or Frank? Rely upon my best services."

"Oh, no," said Nest, laughing and colouring; "how could Lady Julia be so foolish?"

"Nothing about Frank, or yourself?" said the Duke.

"I assure you, Elmore, nothing; in fact, I sent you no message."

"There must have been something, though, for you look, little sister, quite silly and confused, if I may say so."

"I may well look silly," said Nest, "and confused too."

"Then if you won't tell me, I must guess."

"Oh, no! pray don't, the whole affair is so truly ridiculous."

"Now, I think quite the contrary. When you are intrusted with the offer of a lady's hand, to a diffident lover, you ought to be more grave and serious about it."

"Ah! Elmore, as Mimi says, you are too quick."

"Nay, impute not wizard-like propensities to me. Give me credit for having received a similar message before."

"Pray, do not think I sent you a message, I beseech you, cousin Elmore."

"Ay, I see your sense of womanly deco-

rum is shocked; but it needs not, little sister. It is said, everybody is insane on some subject. That is Lady Julia's; but do not believe she is outraging female propriety. It is her weakness, her insanity. I have no doubt she would be as shocked as you are, could she view the matter as a rational person. So, Nest, we will pity, not blame her."

"I am willing to do so," murmured Nest; still looking, what can only be termed, confounded.

"You see, we are strange people in Yorkshire, and are not brought up with the care and discernment bestowed on little Welsh girls. But I must not be impertinent, so I will ask you a question. Did you ever ask yourself, if people can love twice?"

"No, cousin. It is a sort of question hardly to be asked by any one, but a party interested. You mean to say, cousin, you have

loved before, and cannot, therefore, love Lady Julia now."

"You have the feminine knack, I see, of jumping at a conclusion; but this time you have jumped too far. I certainly have loved before; but even supposing I had not, I do not think that would make me like Lady Julia any more than I do at present. In the first place, I hold all men weak, who marry women ten years older than themselves. In the second place, she is a worldly woman, thinking more of a presentation at court, than any other known duty under the sun. But we have discussed her before. My question was simply asked, for the simple purpose of knowing your opinion on this oft-mooted point."

"I hope you will love again, Elmore, you are so fitted for domestic life," said Nest.

"And you call that an answer, do you, Lady Gomer? I am discovering every moment more feminine weaknesses about you, and,

really, I am rather glad of it. It is not good for weak mortals to be surfeited with too much perfection; they may admire, but cannot love minds flighting up so high.

"However," he continued in a low, and strangely, musically sad voice, "it is of little use hiding the truth. I have my moments of weakness, like all mortals, and in carrying within me the seeds of the heart's night-shade, the flowers will sometimes bud and show themselves, spite of all my care. I asked you that question, little sister, as the felon asks of his gaoler, when he will be free. I saw in you a mind trained to reason and reflection, and, with the hope of finding a balm for my gnawing pain, I asked you, as I often ask my heart, 'Can I love again?'"

"No, cousin," said Nest; "but you have God's best and happiest gift—a cheerful heart."

"My cheerful heart sometimes fails me; but can you, so young, answer so decidedly?"

"I feel that this flower of the heart blooms but once. Whoever calls it into bud, sees the fruition, or sees the bud fade. No other being can have aught to do with it," said Nest.

"But few marry their first love?"

"I am so inexperienced," said Nest, "I can only say what I feel."

"At your age, to pin every blossom of life on a person like Frank, whom you knew but two months before you married him?"

"But, Elmore, Frank bears his nature in his face. Do you think I could have liked Sir John West? whom I saw for the first time with him, and who, apparently, admired me much more than Frank did."

"Ah! did he? very like him, that. Yet, in point of fact, Nest, he is handsomer than Frank."

"Oh! cousin, with those bold bad eyes; that scornful thick mouth. Never! I think him ugly."

"So do I; but still I return to what I was

saying. Suppose you are deceived in Frank; that he proves the reverse of what you expected; would a nature like yours still consider it necessary to love him?"

"Under no circumstances, can I believe it possible, not to love my husband," exclaimed Nest.

"Good little sister, you cannot ease my heart of the load, I will not permit even my mother to see; but you can, as regards yourself; I am a little, a very little in fear, for the future. I do not like this set of people now in the house. When Lady Jane is quiet, she is mischievous; you cannot conceive what plots may be hatching against your peace of mind, and Frank's welfare; because it is impossible for a pure nature to imagine such things. I would have you warned, Nest."

"I know I am young and inexperienced in most things," said Nest; "but not in truth and hope."

"You will need both, for Frank's sake; and

without saying a word, a thought, that can disparage him, in your loyal wife's heart, remember it is you who will have to support him; it is on you that all weight will fall. I would warn you, that as much from inheritance by birth, as from the most evil influence since childhood, he needs a firm, kind hand; a loving, truthful heart; a forbearing friend; an enduring, devoted wife, Nest, to get him safely through the perils around him. Will you forgive me, saying all this? I have the welfare of you both so much at heart, I forget that interference may be as unwelcome as seemingly impertinent."

"No, no, cousin," murmured Nest.

"And you know, little sister," he continued, smiling mournfully, "you will give me no hope, that I may cure my heart's sickness, so I must make myself happy, in seeing others so; and I feel that in witnessing your's and Frank's welfare, I shall be doing a great deal towards keeping up my cheerful heart. But,

alas! how I have lost sight of Lady Julia. You shall not be again troubled with her confidence, Nest; I think, and have thought for some time, that it by no means adds to the credit of either party, that this foolish matter has remained so long in its present state. If I was you, I would return to the rose-garden; I will make your apologies to my mother; you look flushed, and I feel I have been a very interfering brother, to teaze you so."

Nest obeyed, her heart was a little overcast.

How the Duke managed his affairs between Lady Julia and himself, remained a secret between them.

That she could not at once realize the idea, she must part with her favourite scheme, which was as much part of herself as an arm or a leg, and caused her as much pain to dismiss from her mind, as to cut either of them from her body, was obvious.

She absolutely moped, and though she ob-

tained no sympathy from her sister, Nest, Mimi, and Frank were unremitting in their cheerful attentions, while they took care to avoid anything like consciousness of the matter.

She did not, however, remain long ; and after making Frank promise, that he would certainly bring her niece, Lady Gomer, to London, next spring, that she might be properly presented, intimating that if Mimi continued to improve so much, she ought to undergo the same ceremony, she took her departure, and would ere long have been forgotten by all, had not card been received one morning, tied with silver.

Il Principe D'Arubino.

La Principessa D'Arubino, nèe Elmore.

She had married a horrid little dirty Italian Prince, who having nothing to live on in his own country, devoted himself with real admiring gratitude to the Lady Julia, paying her the deference and devotion of an humble subject, for the many substantial comforts and luxuries, she bestowed upon him in return for his empty

title of Principe. And they really got on very well together; he all devotion, and she paying a certain degree of civility to his title. For an Adonis, with only Mr. before his name, would never have been regarded by her in the distinguished light with which she looked upon the little yellow baboon, Prince D'Arubino.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SIGHING wind was murmuring round the battlements and towers of Gomer Castle; a loosened casement, or unfastened window, permitted the mournful sound to enter. And it seemed as if a good spirit was beseeching an entrance, and moaning its disappointment. Fitfully it came and went, like the sobbing of a little child, but never rose higher; so perhaps Lady Jane did not hear it, or if she did, refused to listen. For presently it lulled away in the distance, and after a few sad returns, the night grew still and quiet as the grave. And Lady

Jane thought. And Lady Jane laid her down to rest, having determined on doing two things.

On the morrow, Mimi was informed that her mother would no longer permit the idleness of the last few months. She would no longer suffer the rose-garden to occupy any part of her time or attention. And above all, she particularly requested that Miss Gomer should no longer associate in the familiar manner she had been doing, with Lady Gomer. Estimable as Lady Gomer was, there were many things in which she did not wish her daughter to resemble her—in fact, all intercourse was forbidden; and to enforce obedience, a spy was to be employed to watch, that at no moment of the day should Nest and Mimi speak to each other. Mimi received this order, in much about the same manner, as a wild young colt feeling the lasso about its throat for the first time.

She stormed, she raged, she sulked, and then

she sulked, raged, and stormed again. With the vehement, headstrong nature, she inherited from her father, were mixed the bitter revengeful feelings of her mother.

What she said to her, only caused the lasso to be tighter drawn. As Lady Jane said, with her sarcastic laugh, "I am the more decided, Miss Gomer, that my orders shall be obeyed, for your conduct speaks without further comment, of the company in which you have been lately living. I imagined Lady Gomer was a good-natured little thing ; but if this is the manner in which you have been accustomed to act lately, I think myself happy in discovering it, ere it is too late. A pretty exhibition indeed for a young lady, and most gratifying to the heart of a mother like me to behold."

It is needless to say, that poor little Mimi disgraced herself, and all with whom she had been lately associating, by the violence of her manners. For to the fine generous nature she really possessed, in no possible manner

could her mother have galled her more. That Nest, her own gentle angel Nest, to whom she was indebted for every thing that had lately so improved her, should be thus spoken of, thus sneered at, and all through her folly and passion, only made her folly and passion worse.

"But," she muttered, as she paced her room half that night, "I'll be revenged. I won't obey her; I will do as I like; she never was a mother to me. Nest is everything to me; I can obey her, I feel the wish to be good by her side. Why should I do, as she, that unkind, hard woman, wishes? she makes me a hypocrite, but it's her own fault; I will go on as usual, I will say nothing, but quietly pursue my way. Ah! my bad, passionate temper, my wicked, ill-ruled tongue, perhaps, if I had been quiet, it would have been better."

In unavailing regrets, in alternate fits of passion and fits of remorse, Mimi spent that night. But she was with Nest, in the rose-

garden, the moment she saw her leaving the house, at their usual hour, hitherto, to work there.

Nest had, apparently, been weeping half the night too. Lady Jane would have rejoiced, had she seen that sorrowful white face, in the fulfilment of the idea, that she could only disturb Nest's heart through Frank or Mimi.

She folded her arms round the excited, unhappy girl, who exclaimed, with her usual vehemence, "So, you have been miserable too, Nest; but I don't intend to be so any more. I am not going to obey her, and I wont."

"But, Mimi, she is your mother."

"She has been no mother to me, and is now less so than ever. I will do just as I like. She shall not control me."

"But, my Mimi, it won't last long; she will soon forget all about it, if you be but good and obedient now."

"I won't be good and obedient, I won't give you up. Now, Nest, don't look at me

so, you forget what you are asking me to do."

"But, Mimi, a mother's wishes — your duty—"

"And do you talk to me of duty, when you know full well, I can pay none? Is this your care for me? making me love and like that which is good, and then turning me off, to such a fate, that I envy the ants in this hillock; cruel, cruel Nest! worse than my mother."

"Nay, my darling, you know I would not say so; you know I would sacrifice everything I could for you; but a mother's orders seem to me so sacred."

"Such a mother's as mine, I suppose. But do as you like, prate of duty and love to parents, I owe none to anybody. I had a little vision of happiness, and a blessed time of peace came upon me. But when you, who gave it me, talk in this cold, heartless, mocking manner, I consider you as bad as the

other; nay, worse. You are cruel, I say, do you know what you leave me to? a life worse than an infidel; a life more galling and hideous than I can describe. Answer me, answer now, say simply yes or no, am I to leave you? to give you up, and become myself the wretch I was before? answer at once."

"For a time, my Mimi, my own sister."

"Yes or no," gasped Mimi.

"You know it must be 'yes,' my dearest," said Nest.

"Then go, go away, with your duty and obedience; go, and take with you my last speech. I wish I had never seen you; I wish you had never come here; I wish I was the same being, that ten months ago you found me, for then I should not know now how wretched and miserable I am." And flinging Nest's clinging arms from her, she bounded away, and left her sister-in-law stunned and speechless.

In this state Frank found her, and as if an

evil genius was also throwing its mantle over him, he took Mimi's part, and upbraided Nest for thinking of paying deference to his mother's wishes. At the same time that he complained, in bitter terms, of her conduct towards him—"Not content with boring me to death with that fellow, Malcolm, always asking me to do this, that, and the other for him; always at me for being so uncivil, as to leave him to drink his wine alone; she must also keep that dissipated, gambling West here, whose conduct to his wife is already so infamous. I should kick him out of the house, if Augusta's behaviour was not as bad. And the sister," continued Frank, while a burning blush rose to his brow, "I believe that sister is as unprincipled as her brother."

"We must bear it, as well as we can, dear Frank, just for a short time. They must go soon now, you know, and if not, rather than sacrifice one's peace and comfort, you will have to send them away."

"By Jove, I will; I have a good mind to warn them off to-day. It is not one person, but a dozen of our friends remark to me, 'How can you suffer Lady Gomer to be mixed up with such people?' Loved and honoured as you are now, by all who know you, my Nessie, I wonder at my folly in suffering such people to be near you."

"I do not care how soon they go, dear Frank. How long is it now since you have been up in time to hear me read you one short Psalm? The poor little weary wife is obliged to go to sleep, worn out with watching and longing."

"It is true, it is true; but you cannot tell, Nest, how I am laughed at, and pestered by those men, or how my mother seems intuitively to know when I try to steal away, and sends me back again with her mocking laugh. I often feel as if the demon spell was upon me, as it was upon my father, for this wine leaves a constant burning thirst behind it,

that nothing but wine seems to cool for the time."

"Must I, too, then begin to laugh scornfully, that I may have my way?" said Nest, in a low, exquisitely mournful tone.

"No, my darling; but you will allow for your poor Frank, you will feel for him."

"No," said Nest, hiding her face on her shoulder, "I only feel for myself at present. I think, when I sit so long and weariedly in the great chair at night, listening for the dear footstep, so well known, how hard it is, that I should not have the company I prize so much. When those that have it, only think of the money they are winning from him, or the wine they are drinking, or laughing to themselves, that they have got their way, instead of the poor weary, waiting wife, with the Bible on her knee. But, oh! Frank, my Frank, that is not all;" and she hesitated.

"You mean that odious Theresa West; but, indeed, Nessie, you need not fear. I grant at

one time I did like her, but you know I cannot do so now. And you must not mind her forward, bold ways, they only disgust me."

"It was not about her, Frank; I know your true, noble nature; I fear nothing from her. It was something else, Frank."

"What! my darling? how you tremble. What! my own gentle one? you keep me on thorns."

"I think it so hard, Frank, that I have so little of your company, when you know that hour, so near now, which gives you your child, may take the mother's life."

"My own—my beloved one, God forgive my foolish, weak heart. I ought to have thought of this before. But I am the slave of impulse. Ah! well did Elmore say of me, 'Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.'"

"When could Elmore say such a thing?" said Nest, kissing and caressing his hand.

"But a short time ago, Nest, and it was about the very people now in the house. And I promised him then, that I would free you from their presence, that you might have a quiet and comfortable time, before my Nessie was in her room. But why—why did you not speak to me before, my wife? why did you not tell me how much you were suffering, my own Nest?"

"I thought, dear, you would see and know. Our little granny told you, Frank, the last day we spent there."

"And I never heeded her, idiot, dolt that I was; but I will be firm, Elmore shall see that I can act with decision. This very day, I will speak to my mother."

"I wish also to ask if her resolution regarding Mimi is unalterable."

They went into the house, and there found the Wests discussing an invitation that had been received by them to go to Nairn.

"How strange," said Augusta; "I thought they did not like you, John."

"No love lost between us, Gus.," said her husband. "A confounded dull place, I should think, to go to, and I am remarkably comfortable here."

"I am afraid," said Frank, "that your quarters here must be given up. I want the house quiet."

"Ah! for a certain domestic event; but that, my dear fellow, is just what I am waiting for. I am going to amuse and take care of you, while the little wife is up stairs."

"Thank you, West, but I shall want neither amusement or watching."

"Oh! we are going to be very conjugal, are we, dispensing caudle, and tasting gruel."

Gomer's face flushed scarlet, he looked round for Nest, but she had gone to seek for Lady Jane. Neither would Sir John have spoken as he did, had she been present, for

he was a willing instrument in Lady Jane's hand. He had a little debt of revenge to pay himself, for certain huffs he had received at the Lady Gomer's hands, and he was in no mood to remain a debtor.

"I trust," said Frank, "it is sufficient for one gentleman to say to another, that his company is not required, to have that suggestion taken in a proper light."

"But I am no gentleman, my dear fellow; I am your brother, and it is my duty to act as a brother. I would not leave you for worlds, moping and pining by yourself, with only old Malcolm to enliven you. No, no; we will beguile the intervening period with a little ecarté, billiards, and such-like amusements."

Frank felt that inward rage was gaining the mastery, so he wisely left the room. Augusta followed him, with the Nairn invitation.

"Now," said Sir John, with a scowl, "I have

settled him; and you, Theresa, have got a 'braw time' before you, to take your revenge, for disappointing you, and making that little fair thing Lady Gomer, instead of you."

"Oh! do not fear," said Theresa; "I have already made him look very silly once or twice; and if he was not really a very true, innocent-hearted fellow, I would have made Lady Gomer look rather green, or yellow, before now."

"Upon my honour, he is at bottom a very worthy creature, but remarkably simple. Though he is dying to get rid of us, he won't have moral courage to turn us out of the house, you will see," said Sir John.

"Ah! what happy times we should have had, could I but have nailed him before he went to Wales. Now, he is all in the good line; really it is quite sickening, seeing them go arm in arm about, to all the cottages and farms, all the people bowing down to the

ground, so proud and so happy, and calling on the Lord to bless them; and they, two simple fools, looking so delighted, and asking such absurd questions, and pretending such an interest in all these dirty, odious, smelling set; and that old owl of a clergyman—"

"Come, come, Theresa, the grapes are sour."

"Sour or not, I am sure Lady Jane would much rather have had me for a daughter-in-law, than that horrid little mealy-mouthed thing."

"Now I see the grapes are sour. Do you know, Theresa, I never saw any woman I admired so much as I do Lady Gomer. Really, if I thought I could gain one look of affection, as she sometimes bestows on that weak fool Gomer, I would sacrifice my life for her. What spirit, what truth and feeling there is in her eyes. She would mould me into anything she liked."

"Pretty confession for a married man!" retorted Theresa;

"My dear," answered he, "you know Augusta married me; I had no hand at all in the matter, and no heart either, and that she knows perfectly well."

"So I suppose; at all events, I hope you understand each other. For my part, I think you are wrong, to suffer her to flirt so abominably."

"Why should I hinder her little amusements, though we have been married only a few months? Besides, my dear, how can you preach? Is it not equally wrong for you to make the fierce love you do to a married man?"

"I do it to oblige Lady Jane."

"I think a little to oblige Miss West. However, I say no more, but will tell you a secret—I am madly in love with Lady Gomer, and have been ever since I first caught a glimpse of her little grey frock in the Dom

Daniel caverns. Theresa, you know me for a man of firm purpose, violent will. I tell you, that the sole aim and purpose of my life shall be, to gain that one look of affection from those matchless, glorious eyes, though I die the next minute."

"Poor thing! do you know I shall begin to pity her, for I know what will be her fate, if you fix your basilisk's eyes on her. But you have kept it all very quiet," continued Theresa.

"Yes, because if once I alarm her propriety, even by a look or word, I know my chance is lost. Frank I mean to be my best friend; he is so utterly guileless, well-intentioned, and, at the same time, foolish and passionate, I can mould him like a ball of paste. But here is my dear wife; loveliest! you look killing in that blue dress."

"Do you think so?" said Augusta; "I

am so glad, I expect Captain Harris will be here to-day."

"So am I glad, sweetest, if you are glad," rejoined Sir John; while a sneer ran over his face.

CHAPTER IX.

"DEAR Mamma, pray be persuaded; you cannot but be conscious, that so far from doing Mimi harm, I have endeavoured to repair Miss Croft's fearful neglect," said Nest to her mother-in-law.

Though Lady Jane was extremely anxious to keep on terms with Nest, especially over her confinement, she could not always control her temper, and in denying Nest's request, she made use of very strong language.

"Pray, mamma, do not," said Nest beseechingly, "dear mamma."

"I really must mention another thing, Lady Gomer, while I am about telling you of your many faults." Lady Jane paused; some inward shudder gave her notice that she was about to inflict a blow upon herself; some slight whisper from her good angel, bade her pause. But no, she had too long given way to her passions, to have them under control now. And though it was with a slight trembling in her voice that she at last spoke, her words were short and determined.

"I have always thought it a matter of extreme ill-breeding on your part, calling me, mamma. I gave you no permission to do so; and even had you the proper courtesy to ask me, I must have declined the honour, until I deemed you worthy of it."

"Are you serious, mamma?" said Nest, lingering over the obnoxious word, with loving earnestness.

"Quite so, for in no one instance can I recollect any thing that you have done, to warrant

my permitting such a liberty. I trust, Lady Gomer, I make myself understood."

"Yes, madam," said Nest, and left the room.

As Nest went wearily up stairs to bed that night, she thought of Mimi, as she had thought almost every hour of that momentous day.

"I cannot sleep to-night and think of my dear little sister, still so torn and racked with anguish, as she was this morning. Perhaps by this time she will hear reason—perhaps a few soothing words may have a blessed effect."

So she stole into Mimi's room, her heart quite beating with pleasure at the thought of seeing her again, after their long separation of a day.

Mimi was in bed, apparently asleep. Nest put down her light, and kneeling by the bedside, placed her hand coaxingly over Mimi's eyes—no movement at all. She saw the face was swollen and disfigured with crying.

"My Mimi, my sister, my darling, it is Nessie, your own Nessie, come to wish you good night."

Not a sound, not a sign of recognition.

"Now wake up for a moment, Mimi, you cannot be so very sleepy, and I not having seen you all day, my Mimi."

An impatient snort came from beneath the bed-clothes.

Nest coaxed and kissed, and tried all persuasive arts she could think of, but Mimi remained dull and deaf to all. So Nest left her, after saying in a whisper, "May God bless and keep my darling sister, and make her remember, that he sends evil to those he loves, to try them if they are willing to be indeed his children."

Night after night did the loving sister-in-law try to break that obdurate silence, that obstinate fit of passionate sulking. Night after night did she beseech God's best blessing on the unkind little sister, who would not vouchsafe her one word in return. And yet Nest knew as well as if she had looked into Mimi's heart, that she lived through her lonely, unhappy

days, thinking solely of the one short half-hour that Nest bestowed on her every night. That she lay listening with feverish impatience, for the now languid step of the once fleet-footed Nest; that she drank in her words, almost returned her caresses, and through the crust of wounded, bitter feelings, a genial dew was rising, fructifying the seed Nest nightly sowed. Poor little Mimi! how long she would have kept up this fierce and savage humour, it is impossible to say. But one night Nest was more than usually pathetic over the unkind, ungenerous Mimi, and wound up her whispered murmurings, by saying,

"Perhaps to-morrow, I may not be able to visit my dear sister. Soon I may be a prisoner on a sick bed. I may no longer be able to give myself this pleasure, to look at her, to kiss her thus, and ask God to bless her and forgive her for her unkindness to her Nest.

Perhaps our Almighty Father may take me to himself, and leave Mimi but a little child, to remember her sister by. And will Mimi be good to my little child? Will she be as unkind to it as she is to me?"

At this stage of Nest's harangue, there was a decided trembling of the bed.

"Perhaps I shall die," continued Nest, "thinking that no kind aunt Mimi will be a mother to my child."

A violent, hysterical sob, burst from the bed; two vehement arms were thrust out, and Nest was clasped to her sister's heart, amid a storm of tears, self-upbraidings, self-reproaches, and the sweetest, gentlest, dearest epithets.

Mimi was quite subdued. Let Nest ask what she would, Mimi would obey; even to calling her mother a good woman. She would endure Miss Croft, she would even obey her, she would try to improve, and only exacted one promise. As long as Nest could, she was

to devote this one half-hour to Mimi; to encourage, love, and pray for her, that she might indeed endure her allotted burden, with a christian and resigned spirit.

CHAPTER X.

The little flickering flame of popularity that Lady Jane had fanned into being, some time back, had gone out, almost before it had lighted. The canny Yorkshire people were a great deal too knowing not to see, that if Lady Jane had any thing to complain of at all in her daughter-in law, it was, that she was much too superior to endure always the company which Lady Jane had gathered around her; there could be no sort of association between her, and such people as the Wests. And while Lord Gomer was blamed for not exerting

his proper authority in clearing his house of such people, the character of the Lady Gomer rose higher and higher. And Lady Jane was fully aware of it; fully aware that all the leading families in the county looked coldly on Sir John, but askance at his wife, and not at all at his sister.

And yet she persisted in carrying out those two ideas we have mentioned before. One of which regarded Mimi, and the other, the reader must by this time be pretty well aware, concerned Miss West.

Nevertheless, she wished to be on good terms with her daughter-in-law; she felt a sort of insane wish to lord it once more over Gomer Castle, which she knew she should do, when Nest was up-stairs; yet, if she broke out suddenly, she felt it would not cause Lady Gomer much concern to order her away, before the event took place; notwithstanding that, with the natural reserve and timidity of a young girl, Nest had left every arrangement concern-

ing her approaching confinement to her mother-in-law; but Lady Jane was looking forward to this event as a time when she could make another bold stroke, supposing her scheme concerning Miss West should fail.

Mimi's, she flattered herself, had succeeded to admiration.

"My dear Theresa," said Lady Jane one day, "how ill you look; my love, pray, for the love of heaven, tell me if anything is the matter."

"Not much," said Theresa, mournfully.

"Would you like a ride, love? can I do anything to relieve you? Ah! my poor dear child, I know full well what is breaking your heart and health together."

"Do not mind me, dearest Lady Jane," said Theresa; "we ought to think now only of Lady Gomer."

"Why," said Nest, quietly, "I feel perfectly well, thank you."

"Poor love!" said Lady Jane, kissing The-

resa, "what shall I do to ease you? Shall I call Frank, and he will give you his arm through the grounds?"

"I should like it, oh! so much; but—" said Theresa, "would it be quite, would—"

"You are to be considered, my love; I cannot suffer any feelings of jealousy to interfere with your health," said Lady Jane.

"Then if you really think it would cause no uneasiness, give no distress to any mind, I think—but, Lady Gomer, are you sure you will not care?"

"Care for what?" said Nest.

"Pray do not affect ignorance," said Lady Jane, sententiously; "you must be aware that Miss West is kindly concerned for you; she fears to ask for Frank's escort, lest your feelings of jealousy—"

Nest laughed; it was a peculiar laugh. Was it possible that so slight a sound, such a silvery, buoyant laugh, could convey the

amount of unconcerned scorn and happiness that it did?

Rising from her chair, Nest approached the window, and calling to her husband, who was on the terrace, said in her usual gentle, quiet tones, "Frank, will you ride or walk with Miss West? she is not well."

"Oh! my darling," said Frank, with all his strong love in his voice, and unknowing that Miss West was so near, "how can you ask me, when you know you promised to let me drive you to Laurel Grove?"

"She is not very well, dear Frank."

"And what on earth do I care about that?" said Frank; "she's—"

"Miss West is here, Frank," said Nest, with quickness.

"I really beg your pardon," said Frank, taking off his hat; and coming into the room, and with the natural politeness of a truly good disposition, he continued, "pray excuse my

rudeness; but will you accompany my wife and me? I am naturally tenacious of losing her company, and that will, I trust, plead my best excuse."

He might as well have said, as Sir John West would have done, "He had rather be hanged than do it;" she would have considered it quite as complimentary.

CHAPTER XI.

The invitation to Nairn had been declined, under the plea, that Sir John did not like to leave Lord Gomer, or Augusta her mother.

But the Duke appeared one morning rather early, with a more felicitous debonnair manner than was usual even in him.

"So, good people, you are going to be domestic and quiet, instead of partaking of our gaieties," said he; his fine handsome face glowing with his morning ride, and a sort of sunshine emanating from his brilliant blue eyes.

"Are you going to have any gaiety?" said Augusta, anxiously.

"To be sure; have you not heard that we two old people, my mother and I, intend giving a ball? and as we know as much about such things as babes in the wood, I have galloped over here for your advice and assistance."

"How charming!" exclaimed one or two voices; "we shall be delighted. What a magnificent ball you will be able to give in your fine old hall."

"Yes, it won't know itself," said the Duke, with a spasmodic effect at a smile. Spite of his hilarious mood, the notion of his beautiful Hall being turned into what he mentally called "a jigging place," rather overcame him.

"And pray what earthly motive have you for giving a ball?" said Lady Jane, in her usual cold, stately tones.

"My earthly motive is a young lady. I see you all so happy and domestic, that I am thinking about following such a good example,

and marrying. But before marrying, like a nine-tailed Bashaw, I must have all the young ladies in the country assembled before me, that I may throw my handkerchief to the favoured one. Ah! I see you don't believe me, Lady Jane; but here, I have brought my credentials in my pocket; not only a letter from my revered mamma, but the proper printed cards. Now behold, young ladies, can you look upon this superb ticket of admission, and think I jest?"

With the most intense delight Augusta and Miss West received the beautiful embossed invitation cards, on which were printed—

"The Duke and Duchess Dowager of Nairn request the honour of Miss West's company to a ball and supper on, &c., &c."

"But, cousin," said Augusta, as she gazed lovingly at her card, "you have named no day."

"Ah! there's the rub; we have not fixed a day, because I could not think of having a ball, unless the two belles of Gomer adorned

it. I came to see if the charms of domestic felicity are likely to deprive me of the pleasure of Lady and Miss West's company?"

"Oh no! no! not on any account!" said both the young ladies, visions of the coveted handkerchief already floating before Theresa's eyes, making her revenge and conquest over Frank, a myth in her mind.

"But where is Mimi?" said the Duke; "she is to be a very important part of the ball. She is to make her débût."

"Nonsense!" said Lady Jane, angrily; "she is, of course, engaged with her studies, as she ought to be."

"Then I won't give a ball," said the Duke, peremptorily.

The two young ladies uttered each a little shriek of horror.

"I will leave you to overcome Lady Jane's objections," said the Duke; "and with your permission, Lady Gomer," turning to Nest,

"I will go and seek Mimi; I have a little private business with her."

So saying, he left the room; and it is needless to say that the vehement entreaties of her daughter and Miss West, made Lady Jane give a qualified permission. Perhaps she might go, provided she was dressed in a white frock and sash, and went as a little girl.

"But what can Elmore want to say to Mimi?" said Augusta, in an agony of curiosity.

"I have observed," said Miss West, who was peculiarly learned in incipient flirtations, "that he has been very full of Mimi, lately. Suppose, now, he throws his ducal handkerchief at her!"

"Oh! law! no!" said Augusta; "that little chick! do you hear, mamma?"

"I do, my dear, but I really cannot undertake to say what strange things the Duke may do. He did not inherit his dukedom by direct descent, and that may account for his some-

times acting in a manner very inconsistent with his rank."

Nevertheless, Lady Jane did think it strange of him; and though she had no particular love for her child, she could not but feel a momentary pride at the thought of Mimi becoming Duchess of Nairn.

In the half hour of the Duke's absence, she had almost brought herself to think it a settled thing, and that she would act accordingly.

As the Duke approached the apartments appropriated to Mimi and her governess, he heard voices, but his own firm tread prevented him hearing the words. As they became audible to the speakers, he perceived a figure withdraw from the threshold of the school-room door, and go down a narrow staircase.

"Mimi, who is your visitor?" said he, entering the room.

"Oh! dear, dear cousin, how glad I am to see you. I knew you would not forget me."

"But who was that fellow?"

"Only Hugh, mamma's page."

"And what the deuce sends him here, talking to you, Miss Mimi? Page, indeed! I took him for some Orlando in disguise."

"Yes, is he not handsome? He is that gipsy boy, mamma bought long ago."

"But I thought he was called Alphonso?"

"Mamma calls him so, but that is not his real name. It is Hugh Leonard."

"And what was he doing here, child?"

"He came to borrow some books, cousin He has to wait all day long at the bottom of those little stairs, in case mamma wants any thing. And so, to pass the time, I lend him books."

"And pray, what sort of books?"

"Oh! history, and science, and all sorts of books," returned Mimi.

"And pray, what were you talking to each other about, just now?"

"How curious you are, cousin. He was

telling me what he thought of Rollin's History."

"Very romantic indeed! reading it in its original language, I suppose."

"Oh, yes! cousin, he is very well educated, and speaks and writes lots of languages."

"Is that supposed to be a *sine qua non* in a page's education, Mimi?"

"No! cousin, but that's all mamma's fault. It's just one of her whims. She goes and buys a boy, and after a while he is almost starved, kicked and cuffed about, until she finds out by accident that he is remarkably clever. Then she gives him a gentleman's education, with all the best masters. In fact, takes much more pains with him than ever she did with us, and finally makes him her page. That's what mamma did with him, and it's just like her, and he is miserable and wretched."

"But is that any reason, because the mamma

ill-treats him, that the daughter should make him her bosom friend?"

"I don't indeed! cousin, I don't really; but I feel very much for him, educated as he has been, and then to be kicked down among the servants; and if I had an hundred pounds, I would give it to him to-morrow, to help him to get away."

"Well! that is very decent of you, considering he is such a handsome young fellow, and you could pay your mother off such a lot of old scores by running away with him. A pretty to-do her Ladyship would make if one of her daughters eloped with her pet page!"

"Cousin, how naughty you are; but that puts me in mind of—— Cousin, I have been so wicked, so naughty, and almost broke Nest's heart."

"Then give me back your watch, child."

"Take it, cousin, take it, I don't deserve it. I am sure I deserve no kindness at present, as you shall hear,—of any sort."

She then entered into a detail of all her

sorrows, and all Nest's forbearance, and wound the story up by saying,—

"You see, cousin, what a wretch I have been; but it was all mamma's fault. She aggravates me so much."

"Now, I am of opinion that both you and Frank are the aggravators, as you have used such a word. Even a good-tempered, amiable fellow like myself, you try too much. I shall have to give you all up as incorrigible," said the Duke.

"Oh, no! cousin, dear cousin, don't; but the truth is, I thought Nest could do anything, and so I was quite upset, when I found she could not," said Mimi.

"You expect her to perform miracles, do you? Especially when you by your passionate temper, and Frank by his weak folly, prove worse obstacles to her influence, than all your mother can do. Pray, do you ever ask God to help you? Do you think Nest is to perform what He alone can do? If so, I shall hope no

further good for you, and rather trust that the gentle spirit, who could benefit you, if you would but permit her, may be taken by her God to a peaceful Heaven, ere you break her heart between you."

"Oh! cousin, Oh, Elmore! how severe you are; but it is true, only too true," said Mimi.

"Don't, child, don't sob so. I dare be sworn Nest has forgiven you, and I will try to do so in two or three years' time. Come, come, dry your tears. Bless the child, she is raining tears. I will leave you, Mimi, if you don't compose yourself. My nerves are not strong, the sight of tears sets them all quivering. You ought to thank God for making you feel. There is nothing like experience in sorrow, it warms you to feel for others. Come, come, I have business with you, my time is precious. So, Sir Page lives down here, does he?" peeping down the stairs.

"Yes, cousin," sobbed Mimi.

"And does your mother never miss him?"

"No, cousin, for he can be up in two skips, and down again."

"Does he then often take these two skips?"

"Yes, pretty often; he is the only person I have to speak to, sometimes for days. And he also reads the books, and then tells me what I should like in them."

"And what does he call you, dearest Mimi? eh!" said her cousin.

"Oh! cousin, how foolish in you to ask such a question; of course, he always calls me Miss Gomer, and is most respectful."

"Ah! well, that seems amiable of him; but about my business. I want—no, it is my mother who wants this house to be free of its present company, very shortly. Frank is too weak and indulgent to do as he ought, which, in my opinion, is to turn them out, whether they will or no. So we are about to sacrifice ourselves on the altar of friendship,

and ask them to Nairn. But Sir John is too deep for us simple folk, we are obliged to bribe them, and have hit up a ball as the most alluring bait. And I feel pretty well inclined for that, inasmuch as I have thought for some time that I would give a ball, in order that you may make your *debût* in proper style."

"Oh! cousin, thank you a thousand thanks."

"Do not be in such a hurry, child. Of course I was not aware how naughty you had been; and then, I am not comfortable about this page," interrupted the Duke.

"Yes, yes, it is true about Nest. I deserve nothing—I ought to have no pleasure—I was cruel to her, so do not think of me, I deserve nothing; I will try and bear my disappointment," exclaimed Mimi.

"Come, come, why, who can this be, turned into a first-rate heroine? I shall begin to think that it is Nest herself. My dear child

I will have no ball, unless you are there; and my business with you is to consult about the day. I wish to fix it, so as to leave Frank and Nest quiet for a little time. My mother thinks Nest should not be teazed with company. Because, because,—do you not expect some sort of domestic event soon?"

"No," said Mimi, innocently, "we do not change our servants now, at the rate we did, before Frank married."

"Nonsense, my dear child, I mean another description of event. The consequences of which are, any amount of caudle and cake."

"Oh, yes, Nest's child. Yes, that we do. We expect a darling baby!"

"Well, I thought so; when is it coming?"

"I do not know, indeed, cousin; Nest never told me. But I think it will be very soon."

"Have you noticed any stout female lately added to the establishment? Really, my mother ought to have come herself, to manage this matter."

"Cousin, I will run and ask Seaworth. I see what you want to do. You want to get all these people away before it comes. Seaworth will tell me in a minute, she would cut off both hands for her lady; and how kind of you and my aunt! Oh! cousin, what a blessing it must be, to have a kind, thoughtful heart."

"Do not be in such a hurry, child. You have got the blessing you want—a nice little good heart as any one could desire to have. Now do not tell Seaworth anything about me; you must be careful in what you say. Tell her your aunt wishes to know, or something reasonable."

"Yes, yes, cousin, trust to me."

"And hark, child, send Sir Page to me. I wish to find out what he is like, and if I probe him satisfactorily, I may give him something better to do, than taking skips upstairs."

"Oh, thank you, cousin, many times; my heart burns with indignation, when I think of

mamma's injustice to him. But let Mr. Stewart try him, cousin, put him under him for a little, and then he will see how clever he is, and quite fit for an agent already. Here, Hugh, Hugh, come quickly. Oh! Hugh, such fortune for you; the Duke is here, in the school-room, he wishes to speak to you; he will befriend you, I know, he is so kind. I am so delighted."

Hugh, or Alphonso, had made his two skips at the first sound of her voice; and as she ceased speaking, and left them together, the Duke could not but be struck with the speaking intelligence of his eyes, and the grace and ease with which he moved and spoke.

Nevertheless, a proud humility, if it may be expressed, rather took from the deference and respect that the Duke might naturally expect to find in a page. But when he began to speak, there was a sense and propriety in all he said, that interested the Duke imme-

diately. He glossed over, with delicate feeling, all that he had suffered from Lady Jane's inconsistencies, while his eyes flashed, and his whole face glowed with anger, as he narrated the indignities he had to bear from the household. Concluding, that had he even one farthing of money—could he but call the dress he wore his own—he would have left long ago, left, if breaking stones on the road was his only resource."

"I do not believe that," thought his Grace to himself; "he does not mention Mimi; but I doubt, if she gave him her one hundred pounds, whether he would not still be content to sit at the bottom of the back-stairs, provided he might make his two skips."

Mimi returning, the Duke merely promising that he would remember him, the page left, making a bow so grateful, as well as graceful, it caused him some little amazement.

"Well, Mimi?"

"Well, cousin, it is true; you were quite right. There is a great stout woman in the house; and she is the nurse. Seaworth does not much fancy her; but at that I do not wonder, for she is one of mamma's sort."

"But the time, my dear child—when is the best time to get all these people out of the house?"

"Oh! Seaworth says, if her Grace will only get the house quiet in about a week's time, she will be for ever grateful."

"Very good. Then we will ask these people to come a week before the ball, under the notion that they are to superintend the preparations. Not that you need come, child, until the day of the ball, because you would like, perhaps, to enjoy a little quiet time with Frank and Nest."

"Cousin, cousin, you are the dearest, best of cousins."

"My dear, I am quite aware of the fact, so do not smother me. But I have more business on my hands, unhappy mortal that I am. Your little granny is going to give you your ball-dress, and you are to send a pattern-dress, in the course of a day, to Laurel Grove; and here, child, take your watch back again. But beware, for perhaps I may not again be in such a good humour; also, your aunt sends you this, to wear at the ball. You have, no doubt, been very naughty, but as you seem so sorrowful, we will say no more. And as for Sir Page—well, well; do not cry, you know I cannot bear it. Put up your foolish little face, and take this kiss of forgiveness and forgetfulness."

"Well! I declare," said a voice at the door, in prodigious amazement; "so you only came up here to kiss Mimi, did you, cousin?"

It was Augusta, whose curiosity being ungovernable, she had run up stairs to see what

food she could find to satiate it, and caught them in the very act.

"Ha, ha!" said her cousin, "a good joke, is it not? When you are as good as Mimi, perhaps, my dear, I may favour you with a salute some day."

CHAPTER XII.

The ball was settled to take place that day fortnight, and the whole party were asked to come the week before, to help to make arrangements.

In spite of Augusta's "Tale of the Schoolroom," and Lady Jane's consequent determination, that she would do all she could to fan the Duke's incipient flame for Mimi, Miss West went to Nairn, brimful of hopes and happiness. She had not such a poor opinion of her charms, or powers of fascination, as to suppose that she could not accomplish a great

deal in a week; and though she had lately experienced a sad blow in Lord Gomer's utter indifference, not to say disgust, at her conduct, it would be very different with the Duke. No outrage would be committed on propriety, let her go the extreme lengths of flirting with him; nay, she was anxious to go the extreme limit, for she would then have a powerful engine against him. In fact, the thoughts, schemes, plans, and wishes she indulged in, were as boundless as they were heartless, and such as neither the reader nor writer would wish to enter into.

Beautiful Nairn! with your fine park, garnished and ornamented with such magnificent trees, such spacious, sweeping, velvety glades, opening one into another; such stately avenues, casting a kingly shade over the herds of deer, and sending their long shadows over the silvery lakes. Beautiful Nairn! so rich, so fertile, so royally grand. The rippling river running through the lovely grounds, now fast, now

slow, now widening into deep quiet pools, as if it must rest and look awhile upon such beauty. Beautiful Nairn! with its wooded hills, its vistas of quiet loveliness, its mossy seats, its quaint old Grecian temples, its lovely sequestered walks, and, above all, in its grand old ruin! Truly, the monks of old knew where Beauty dwelt. Thus spoke the Duke to his heart, as he returned home.

"Well, my dear mother, the bait hath taken wonderfully. If, like me, you had any secret hopes that our plan would not succeed, drive them away. They are all coming, and I have been apologising to my stately trees, and lovely scenes, for polluting their beauty with such people."

"I can assure you, my dear son, that I am looking forward with some pleasure to the ball."

"Vain old lady, what do you mean by such a speech?"

"Oh! I have much of which to be vain,

and one of my greatest sins in that way, is delight in seeing my son exercise the rights of hospitality as he does."

"Spare me, my dearest mother, spare me. Am I not fresh from Gomer? it is all as we suspected there; Frank has been unable to order those people out of his house, Lady Jane is affecting deep interest in his wife, and great affection for him, and the poor fellow is swallowing the rancid morsels, like sugared butter. Sir John looks up to any wickedness, his wife to any folly, and I should dearly like to have Miss Theresa put into solitary confinement for a few months; and yet I have been such a hypocrite! Frank, Frank, what dirt you make me eat; you will owe me a debt of gratitude a life-time won't repay. But I am in a dreadful dilemma, my dear mother; how can I break the news to Stewart? When he hears I am going to give a ball, I don't know whether he will not leave me on the spot."

"Poor Stewart!" said the Duchess; "I make no doubt he will be terribly shocked, unless he fancies it will be a good thing in a political point of view."

"I want to ask him a favour too. To take under his charge Lady Jane's page. His duties lie in close proximity to Mimi's school-room, and they seem thick as peas."

"My dear son!"

"It is true, dear mother; that is Lady Jane's way of managing matters. She will not let Mimi associate with Nest, just out of perverseness, but shuts her up all day with that senseless idiot of a governess, and a very handsome, clever, intelligent page two skips off only, as they tell me."

"I hope you asked Mimi."

"Of course. Moreover, I said I would not have a ball without Mimi; and I was caught saluting her in a fatherly manner, which made Lady Jane see Mimi in the distance, arrayed

in strawberry-leaves, gave Augusta a severe pang, and put Miss West into a bed of mental nettles."

"Dear Elmore, how you rattle on, so unlike yourself."

"Ah! I see Stewart," said the Duke, opening the window of the summer parlour, and calling him.

"Stewart, I have been a very naughty boy. I have been and gone and made a promise to a young female."

"Deed, yer Grace, so she be ain o' the right sort, I dinna ken that ye cauld do better."

"Then you do not see any harm in my promising to give a ball?"

"A what? yer Grace."

"A ball, a dance, a hopping affair, with a supper and a band, and such like things."

"Ay! but your Grace must aye hae your joke."

"Man, it is no joke, it is a sober fact; and here is her Grace quite in glee about it."

"It's no me as has ony right to preach to yer Grace; ye maun aye turn Nairn into a conventicle, and I hae no word to say agin it."

"There, my dear mother, Stewart is sulky over the matter. I will leave you to explain it. He will dance probably at the ball, if you only tell him it is given for Lady Gomer's sake."

CHAPTER XIII.

All went on very well. To do the Duke justice, whether he disliked his guests or not, no one was more scrupulously polite, few could be more agreeable than he was in his own house. The grounds about Nairn were extremely beautiful, and so diversified, that there was employment for many a day, in visiting them. Riding horses, ponies, carriages of all sorts, were always at their command; the house was completely full, and the preparations for the ball went on in a style of regal magnificence.

Miss West was in the seventh heaven, Augusta in the sixth, Lady Jane and Sir John both about the first, or second. And the day before the ball arrived.

"Any commands for Gomer?" said the Duke, at breakfast.

"What takes you there, my dear Duke?" said Lady Jane, quite graciously.

"I am going for the queen of the ball. I said I would not go for her until to-morrow, but I have changed my mind, for fear her hair should be out of curl. Dear mother, I hope you have kept a room for Mimi."

"Yes, Elmore, she is to be in my dressing-room."

Lady and Miss West exchanged glances. Lady Jane coughed a comfortable cough of self-congratulation.—Mimi was in ecstacies. Frank and Nest were equally pleased for her.

"Oh, Frank!" said Nest, "you must go to the ball to-morrow, because it is Mimi's first

one, and I shall want to know how she likes it, and how she looks."

"Yes, pray do, Frank," said the Duke; "I only wish my ball was to be really graced by your appearance, little sister."

"I should have liked it too," said Nest; "for do you know, it would have been my first appearance at a ball!"

"Good lack! good lack! do not let that out, keep it a secret. You will lose twenty per cent. in the Wests' eyes if you allow it."

"Now, Mimi, jump in; you see I have brought the little thorough-breds, that you may drive. We shall expect you to-morrow, Frank; you ought to come, if only to help me, like an affectionate cousin. Now, child, do not upset us, or there will be no ball. You look very happy, especially leaving Chevalier Page behind. I thought to bring a card in my pocket, in case you could not leave him."

"Cousin! cousin!"

"Come, do not be angry. It would have been rather good fun, to dress him up and introduce him to Lady Jane, as Count Orlando. Now I hear the good little granny has prepared you a lovely dress, and you have, I hope, got your aunt's present of pearls."

"Yes, dear, dear cousin."

"Come, look to your steeds. Then you must remember you are to act like a young lady, like a sister of Nest's; do you regard what I say?"

"Yes, yes, dear cousin. Ah! if I only could be like her."

"Well, you do pretty well on the whole, and you are a generous, frank, most unselfish girl, I will say. But I wish to warn you of one thing;—if you take to flirting like Augusta, or looking like Miss West, I will not speak to you the whole evening, and I will tell Nest you looked a fright!"

"Oh! I will not. I will try my best to do neither."

"Good child; now here we are, and you have driven very well, and there is your anxious mother looking out of the window, quite delighted to see you so happy with your old cousin. And there are your dear sister, and Miss West, also peeping at us, out of the turret room. They will conclude we are flirting, Mimi, which is a very fine joke."

"Ah, ha! so it is, cousin; but I suppose you will let me flirt with you? may I not, cousin?"

"To be sure, my dear, only do not kiss me before all the people."

"But when you are so good to me, how can I refrain?"

"Ah! when you are come out, you will perceive so great a change in yourself, you will be quite astonished thereat."

CHAPTER XIV.

Lady Jane was really pleased to see Mimi, and the child's warm heart shone through her eyes, and flushed her cheeks, making her so pretty, that Augusta felt constrained to snub her as often as possible; while Miss West felt she could willingly beat her. Then, when dressed for the ball, in her spotless white lace dress, long wreaths of shining ivy, mixed with her lovely gold-lit ringlets, ornamented with the Duchess's beautiful present of pearls, Mimi surprised even the Duke himself with her appearance.

And there was a sweet pretty air of innocence and *naïvetè* about her, that he could not help saying, as he led her to the head of the ball-room—

"Well, Mimi, I am very proud of my partner, and very glad I fixed upon you to open the ball."

"Upon me, cousin! what, am I to open the ball? Oh! I think that is too much."

"Nonsense! take your place, while I sort the people, and set the fiddlers going. Ah, me! how thankful I am Stewart is not here, to see what a mess we have made of the old hall."

But the Duke congratulated himself too soon; for as he was going from place to place, settling the dancers, and putting all things in order for a beginning, he caught a glimpse of a most unhappy countenance at an open door, and heard these words buzzing in his ear, as he went by.

"Ech, sirs! to think o' our Duke making sich a fule o' himself, and sich a tammy shop o' the ould hall."

Mimi was quite enchanted with the beauty of the scene, the brilliance of the decorations, the gorgeous dresses, the vast quantity of people, the lively music; and as the dance concluded, she said—

"Oh! cousin, I never was so happy; if only Frank and Nest had been here—why! there is Frank."

They went straight up to him, as he stood in a doorway, booted and spurred, splashed with mud, but still radiant happiness in his face.

"Oh, Frank! dear Frank, go and dress, this is so delightful," said Mimi.

"Frank, my boy, your face tells its good news. We are to congratulate you," said the Duke.

"Yes, oh! yes," said Frank; "thank

God, my Nest is safe, and I—have a little son."

"Heartily do we thank God for you, my dear Frank," said the Duke; while Mimi's eyes gushed over with joy.

"I could not resist galloping over with my own news," said Frank; "and I only wish to tell the good tidings to my mother, when I shall depart again."

The good news spread, and the only bitter draught Lady Jane had to swallow that night, was the unalloyed joy and happiness that Lady Gomer's safety diffused over the whole company. The warm, heartfelt congratulations poured in on all sides, showing the respect and love she had gained amongst her neighbours. In the course of the evening, the Duke, quite unintentionally on his part, stumbled on old Stewart, who, catching him by the button, whispered—

"Well, yer Grace, I dinna think it was ill

dune, on your pairt, giving this gay jig, in respect of the gude news. But I am wishing ye had seen her yersel first, and that it was a young Marquis we had gotten. No that I wish ill to my Lord Gomer."

CHAPTER XV.

The ball answered the expectation of everybody, which is an extraordinary fact. Even Miss West, though Mimi did open the ball, had heard the Duke call her "child," and bid her hold up her head, which she deemed an odd way of making love.

She had, herself, looked beautiful, and had gained a vast quantity of admiration, if she had not obtained the Duke's handkerchief.

Lady West had had Captain Harris to herself for most part of the evening, for which no one envied, though every one blamed, her.

The Duchess was not at all fatigued, and the Duke found himself the next morning alive, having more than once, the evening before, declared that this ball would be his death.

The little good grandmother was also present for an hour or two, just to see how Mimi looked, and had the extreme satisfaction of seeing that Lady Jane eschewed her part of the room, which was a notable instance of the lamb triumphing over the wolf.

The Lady Jane really suffered herself to get into such good spirits, that she took to her new dignity of grandmother with astonishing composure; and further declared her determination to return with Mimi, the day but one after the ball, that she might see all was going on as it should in her grandson's nursery.

In vain, the Duchess intreated her to remain quiet at Nairn for a few days; in vain, the Duke got into a bad humour, and snapped at every one; in vain, the whole company de-

clared they would not, could not part with her; almost a solitary instance of such a compliment ever being paid to Lady Jane. With the obstinacy that belongs to small minds, the more she was intreated, the more reason there seemed to be that she should go.

So she went; and who could have imagined that a woman of her age, experience, and pride, would have felt the childish pleasure she did, in walking over the rooms of Gomer, once more as mistress. To be sure, it was to be for a short time; to be sure, there was a little pale girl up-stairs, who still seemed to have a good deal of influence, down-stairs.

She was in such a bland, happy mood, that the sweet-tempered, guileless Frank, felt quite penetrated with her goodness, and most grateful for her kindness, in leaving the merry, happy party at Nairn, for no purpose but to see that all was going on well in the new nursery. He opened his heart to her, in a way he had never done before, for joy as often

upsets the brains as grief; and his mother listened to him without a sneer.

When they met again the next morning, Lady Jane said, "It was extremely fortunate that I returned, for I have been the means of preventing a most serious mistake. Either from ignorance, or her country education, Lady Gomer was intending, that is—she was performing that office for her child, which is properly given to some healthy young girl in the village."

"How do you mean, mother?"

"She intended, my dear Frank, absolutely to act nurse to the child herself; an unheard-of circumstance."

"Is it, mother?"

"Of course, my dear boy; no one in our rank of life ever dreams of such an extraordinary proceeding. I blame Mrs. Teake extremely, for allowing it. I have, however, exerted myself greatly, and, I am glad to say, with success. I have obtained a healthy young

woman; to be sure, she is not married; but that is of no consequence, compared to her health."

Frank listened in blank astonishment, being profoundly ignorant of all the mysterious doings of a nursery; he listened as a dog might do to a Latin oration.

"Besides," continued Lady Jane, quite in spirits under the idea, that for once in her life she was getting the upper hand of Nest, "you, of course, will never permit your wife to go about a horrid slatternly nurse, that you never can take her any where, but a baby and maid must follow. Such things are so vulgar and under-bred."

"To be sure," said Frank, quite awake to the fact, as all young husbands are, that a baby was a baby, and ought never to be out of its nursery, until it could walk. "I understand you now; I see all about it. Thank you for managing the matter; poor dear Nest is so

young, and, of course, knows nothing about these things."

"Thank God! I am always ready to act for those I love," said Lady Jane, fervently; "and I regret no sacrifice, or trouble that I have taken this morning, to prevent so serious a misfortune to you."

A knock at the door was heard, and Seaworth presented herself. If Lady Jane hated one person more in the house than another, it was Seaworth; and if Seaworth could have found language sufficiently strong to express her abhorrence of Lady Jane, she would have done so. At present she opened the door, and merely saying, "My Lord, my Lady wishes to see you," departed again.

"I dare say, my dear son, she wants you about this business; but you must be firm. Brought up, as she has been, she cannot understand the extreme strangeness of such a thing. Tell her I have got a most healthy young

woman. Be firm, my dear Frank, and remember what a sight you will be the next six months if you yield—always followed by a nurse and baby."

"I will be firm, I assure you, my dear mother; I see the whole thing in the proper light. I will soon make my darling Nest see the matter as you do."

But his darling Nest was unlike the calm, quietly-happy, little pale Nest of yesterday. Flushed with fever and excitement, her voice was unnaturally high, as the moment he entered, she exclaimed,

"Oh, Frank, my baby! I have not seen it since last night; they have taken my baby from me."

"My darling, don't be agitated, don't be so excited; baby is all right; I saw the little fellow just now, looking as red as a lobster."

"But Frank, Frank, they say he is to have a nurse, and I am not to be his mother, his own mother. Oh! let me have my baby."

Frank tried to explain matters as well as he

could, but Nest only grew more excited and disturbed. At last he called the nurse.

"To be sure, as I tell my Lady, she will work herself into a fever, and all for nothing. Dear little rosy, cosy fellow, looking the very picter of his dear papa. But it's of no huse hargufying, my Lord; I have talked to my Lady until I am hoarse. I tell her how shocked my Lady Jane is, and how hunbecoming such a thing will be, in a lady of her quality. But still she keeps crying on, 'My baby! my baby!' till she's just beside herself."

Again Frank tried his best arts to soothe her, making use of all Lady Jane's arguments, for want of better, without perceiving they rather added to, than diminished, Nest's unhappiness. Fairly exhausted, Nest lay back on her pillow, the largest, roundest tears, rolling in quick succession down her flushed face; those tears that are only extorted by acute pain of mind or body.

She did not speak, and though Frank was pained by her tears, he yet concluded her silence was owing to being convinced by his arguments, all unwotting of her exhaustion. He kissed her fondly once or twice, felicitating himself upon his unwonted firmness, and then left her, to inform Lady Jane of his success.

She gave him all the plaudits he deserved, and then recommended him to go for a long ride, which he was very glad to do. For the wistful, beseeching glance of those lovely eyes haunted him, and unless he occupied himself in some very active business, spite of his mother's remarks and praises, he felt if he remained at home, he should find himself marching up-stairs, and, handing the baby over to Nest himself, would beg her to do just whatever she liked.

Lady Jane saw him depart with extreme satisfaction, and then, to assure herself that her wishes had been fulfilled, she mounted to

the sick chamber herself, to be certified thereof. She was not formed by nature in any way for a nurse.

Her step was as firm and proud as if she was at the head of her Majesty's Foot-guards; she opened the door with a wide swing, that said of itself, "Behold, Lady Jane!" Her rich silk dress, rustled, and fussed (if such a phrase may be used), until the poor invalid thought pins and needles were running into her brain.

"Well, my dear, how do you do?" said the hard, but still not unmelodious voice of Lady Jane.

"I want my baby," whispered Nest, her eyes gleaming with fever.

"Certainly, my dear; pray look at him, if you wish it. None of us feel inclined to hurt him, I can assure you. Bring the child here, nurse, that Lady Gomer may judge of its welfare, herself."

The nurse brought the child, and Nest

looked at it; and from it, her eyes wandered over the hard, but beautiful face of her mother-in-law. Collecting all her energies, her last remaining strength, she said, in a clear, ringing voice—

"I do not want a nurse for my child; it is mine, it must stay with me."

"Pshaw! my dear child, don't be absurd. I cannot permit you to act in such a manner; one would suppose you were a menial."

"I am its mother," once more, in loud accents, said Nest.

"Nurse," said Lady Jane, "take the child away, and then return. Compose yourself, my dear; it is not proper that you should become thus excited."

"It is your fault, you are killing me," said Nest, faintly; and the large eyes, quite startling from their bright eagerness, again looked up into that cold face.

"Nurse, how very excited Lady Gomer is, she ought to have a composing draught," said

Lady Jane, unable to bear the gaze of those beseeching eyes.

"Deed is she, quite hurting of her Ladyship's self, if I may so say, my Lady," said the nurse; "but I don't know about the draught, my Lady; what will the doctor say?"

"But look at her, Mrs. Teake; really her eyes will jump out of her head in a minute."

"She's fretted so, she's quite feverish, my Lady; and we must expect her to be that too, my Lady, on other accounts."

"Then give her a composing draught immediately; there is one in my room," said Lady Jane.

"Oh! my Lady, I don't think it will be right."

"Do it immediately, Mrs. Teake; you have not now to learn that I want no advice but my own."

The nurse seemed aware of this fact, most perfectly, for she presently brought the draught for her patient to swallow.

"Here is something nice for the darling little mamma, and when she wakes up after it, she will be so well, and so good, and will be quite pleased to see the little king, so cosy and well, with his nice little nursy."

Such a spasm of agony crossed Nest's face as Mrs. Teake thus talked, that even Lady Jane was startled.

Taking the draught, she offered it herself.

"No," said Nest, faintly, it being all she could say.

"You must," said Lady Jane.

Nest swallowed it, and then lay back exhausted.

With high delight, Lady Jane left the room. For once she had triumphed, for once she had obtained her own way, and it should be her own fault if she did not pursue her advantage.

Ordering her carriage, she proceeded to take drive of some miles, and calling upon Lady Y. favoured her with a long dissertation upon all she did, and was doing, for her children. During

which conversation, she wound herself up into such an amiable state of self-gratification, that she did not perceive how entirely she had wearied her beloved friend, and had she been behind the scene, would have been astounded to hear Lady Y.'s last order to her servant, "Remember! I am never at home to Lady Jane Malcolm."

CHAPTER XVI.

FIVE minutes after her mother-in-law's departure, Nest, in a low, but very calm voice, asked to see her sister, for a minute.

"Certainly, my Lady, to be sure, my Lady, and so you shall, though it must be but for a minute. But the dear little mamma is so good now, my baby king, we will oblige her, where we can."

Nest felt she and her baby were in the claws of a vulture; but soon Mimi's arms were round her, her cool lips pressed to the burning forehead.

"What is it, my sister?" she whispered.

"Send that woman away," said Nest abruptly, her eyes again gleaming.

"Go out! Mrs. Teake," said Mimi, authoritatively.

"Hoity, toity! Miss Gomer," said the nurse.

"Go out!" said Mimi; "here, Seaworth, take her by the other arm."

Mrs. Teake found herself in the other room, and the door shut between her and her patient. Highly indignant, she marched down to the housekeeper's room, to complain of her grievances, while Mimi said,—

"And now, my Nessie."

"Oh! Mimi; my baby, they have taken my baby from me. I am not to be its mother, its own mother, it is to have a nurse, and Frank has consented, and I don't know what is to be done; he is over-persuaded, and Lady Jane and Mrs. Teake have given me something that is making me feel like mad. I know I am in

a dreadful fever now, and perhaps I shall die. Oh! Mimi, you and Seaworth alone can save me."

Mimi listened in horror; she had that opinion of her mother, she as much believed she had poisoned Nest, as if she had seen her do it. Nerved up into a desperate energy and calmness, by the exigency of the moment, Mimi again placed her cool lips on Nest's burning brow, and said,—

"Trust to me; if I do not save you and baby, I will die too. But let me go now, for I will get somebody to turn that woman away; leave all to me."

"I will, I do, God bless you; my Mimi," and overcome with the strong narcotic, Nest could say no more.

Mimi, going into the next room and finding no nurse there, lifted up the baby as if it had been a young pig, holding it at arm's length and carried it straight into Nest's bed, thinking rightly to have it by her side, would be her

best antidote. Then, bidding the delighted Seaworth watch, and keep the doors locked for a good hour, which the latter promised to do with immense unction of spirit, she proceeded to her own room, to think what she had best do in the next place.

Her eyes lit upon her watch. She jumped up, and calling Hugh, who answered on the spot, said,—

"Please run down, saddle my pony for me, and a horse for yourself that can jump, and come with me on a matter of lif eand death."

To go with her would have been enough, in Hugh's estimation, without anything more stringent.

Mimi donned her riding gear, and was down at the side door as Hugh brought the horses round. One spring up, and away they went;—

> "O'er brake, bush, and bower,
> They'll have fleet steeds that follow,"

might be said by every one who saw the start.

The Duke was sitting with his mother in the

summer parlour, in a vile humour. The excitement of the ball had kept him up pretty well, but he was getting heartily sick of his uncongenial company.

"Mother, Nairn will be thoroughly disgraced if they stay much longer; Augusta's conduct is disgusting, only to be equalled by the unparalleled complacency of her husband. I believe that man would say, 'Thank you,' if any one carried off his wife. I cannot understand him; lost to shame; to every gentlemanly, honourable feeling. And then, that sister; I am afraid to open my mouth, for fear she should walk down it. Did you speak to Lady Jane about Augusta?"

"Yes, my dear son, but she was extremely indignant, and all but quarrelled with me, at hinting that a daughter of hers could do wrong; besides a bitter speech or two, about my having made the match, and other sundry disagreeables, as disagreeable as they were untrue."

"Mother! who is this, galloping up the

avenue, hair all flying, horse all foam? It is Mimi, and that learned page behind her. God forbid that any thing should have gone wrong at Gomer!"

When he lifted the panting, breathless Mimi from her nearly exhausted pony, he merely said to the servants,—

"Order the Duchess's carriage to the door directly with the four bays, and my curricle with the chesnuts; take care of these horses, and look after the page."

He then carried Mimi into the summer parlour, where she poured forth an incoherent string of misfortunes, in which there was nothing particularly clear; but that somebody was poisoned, the baby most probably, as it was torn from Nest; that Frank would not listen, that Nest was dying, and that Lady Jane was the cause of it all.

"Mother, I have ordered your carriage, and perhaps you will take Mimi back with you. I have desired your things to be brought down,

your maid to accompany you, and here is some refreshment for you, Mimi."

Even as quick as he could desire, everything was ready. A well-beloved master makes quick servants.

"But where are you going, my son?" said the Duchess, seeing his carriage also ready.

"To York, mother."

Away they all went, the Duchess making out, in her sensible manner, nearly the whole case from Mimi, excepting the poisoning, which was inexplicable.

"But how odd of Elmore to go to York," said Mimi; "he always told me to go to him, if Nest wanted help, and gave me this watch to remember my promise."

"He has gone for Dr. M., my child; and you are a good girl to have acted so promptly, and may have saved Nest's precious life."

And so it proved; for when they arrived, the whole house was in confusion; Lady Jane

storming, the servants flying, consternation and horror on all their faces. The Duchess quietly made her way to the sick-room, to which she was guided by cries and words alike piercing and agonizing. With her husband's arms round her, in vain endeavouring to calm her, was Nest, in the wildest state of delirium; her beautiful hair, all flowing and dishevelled; her face scarlet; her arms wildly tossing; while she pieced the air with her cries. Hastily snatching the little baby from his cradle, the Duchess advanced with it to the excited mother, saying, "Here, Nest, here is your baby."

"Take it away! take it away!" said Nest, "it is not mine. Mine is gone, is lost, has been stolen from me. Oh! my baby; Frank's little child, they have taken it away, and I know not where they have hid it."

"Frank, go away, dear boy; Seaworth, get some of the coldest water you can, and bring some cloths. Mrs. Teake, leave her alone.

How can you persist in touching her, when you see she has such a horror of you?" Thus spoke the Duchess.

The calm, sweet voice seemed to soothe Nest, and clinging to the Duchess, she breathed more freely, as she watched, with wild, excited eyes, the nurse leave the room.

"Take care of me," she said, "kind, dear friend."

"I will, I will, my dearest; I do not mean to leave you."

Nest took no notice whatever of her husband, who staggered to a corner of the room, in the deepest grief.

"Lock the door, Seaworth, and help me to put up your Lady's hair," said the Duchess; "now apply these cloths, dipped in water, to her head."

"My darling, my poor Nest," she said, softly and soothingly to her, as she performed all these kind offices.

Nest raised up her head, at the cool touch of

the water, and in a low, quiet voice, began to sing, "What are the wild waves saying?" and then she murmured on to herself, "This fresh cool breeze is from the sea, blessed, eternal sea, so lovely in quiet beauty; so grand in storm and tempest. How I love you, sea; speaking to me of the great Creator; filling my heart with awe and gratitude. Oh, beautiful sea! Oh, boundless air! how refreshing you are to my soul. What happiness you give me; happiness, I was happy. Who has taken my happiness from me? Frank, oh! Frank, my Frank; no, he is not my Frank; he has taken his child away, and I cannot find it. Shall I call him cruel; my husband? No, granny, no; call my husband cruel! never. You know I said I loved him, more than life; that I would live to endure for him—and God has helped me to do so; to bear such things; ah! my granny, did you think your poor little Nest would ever have to fight with such worldly pride and wickedness? But the merciful God

keep me pure amidst it all. 'Praise the Lord, oh! my soul, and forget not all his benefits.' That is the first Psalm I read to him, and he felt it—he felt grateful. My God! will you support and strengthen him, that he may be firm in good purposes? Oh, sea; holy, pure sea, your never-wearying sound is booming in my ears. Are you gathering to your ever-heaving bosom the stately ships, and carrying down happy mortals to your cool, green caverns? Yes; bind my head with the cold sea-weed; let me go down into your coral caves; I have lost a pearl, a little pearl; but, oh! so precious. Dearest granny, my head wanders; say a prayer over your poor weary Nest, weary with looking for her lost pearl. Oh, granny! I had such dreams about it; it had a soul, a precious soul, and I thought to show it all the road to heaven."

Such were Nest's rhapsodies, poured out in low tones, so mournful, so thrilling, that the

Duchess felt her very heart stricken, while poor Seaworth rained tears down.

Frank remained in the corner, with his face buried in his hands, low groans every now and then coming from his lips.

Sometimes the poor girl sang happily, as if wandering among her beloved caverns, still almost a child; then she would string Psalms together, all expressive of her joy and thankfulness. Then her loss and miseries came upon her; but all her murmurs were tempered with such pious resignation, such utter freedom from invective or ill-nature, that the Duchess deemed she heard already the whispers of a redeemed spirit, and thought to herself, "Can we hope to keep among us a soul so fitted to return to its Redeemer?"

"Madam," said Seaworth, in a whisper, "can we hear such words, and see her, or live with her, without benefiting by it? God bless you for coming; you will have been the

means, through His help, of keeping an angel with us."

The amiable Duchess put her hand kindly on the honest servant's shoulder, and said,

"This scene will never be forgotten by either of us, I trust."

A low knock at the door announced Dr. M. He said nothing, but looked at and watched Nest for some moments earnestly, while she continued her wild rhapsody of the sea, and took no notice of him.

A low groan from Frank attracted him.

"Lord Gomer must be removed," said he, in a whisper.

"I will not leave," said Frank, hoarsely.

"You endanger her life, if you stay."

"I tell you I will not stir," in a loud, hasty tone.

"Hark!" said Nest, "there is an angry voice coming over the sea. Oh! be not angry, beautiful sea, it is a mourner, looking for a lost pearl, a sad one, stricken by God and man."

"Call the Duke," said the Duchess.

He understood directly what was wanted.

"Come with me." Frank resisted.

"Do you wish to kill her?"

"Oh! no, no, my Nest, my Nest."

"Frank! Frank!" said Nest, excitedly, "that is his voice. Why did you take my child? Why give it Lady Jane? What will she do with it, think you? Oh! Frank, it was our child, ours; it has a little soul, and what will Lady Jane do with that?"

With one grasp of his powerful arms, the Duke lifted Frank up, and Seaworth quickly opening the door, he bore him out before another word could be said. And ere Frank could extricate himself, he dragged him into a small study, and locked himself in with him. Frank struggled to get out, calling him, in his haste and anger, every ill name he could remember.

The Duke let him rave and storm, while he fanned himself with his pocket handkerchief.

"Why, why," said Frank, incoherently, "do you dare do this to me? Who so fit to be with a wife, but a husband?"

"Yes, a sensible husband."

"What do you mean? How dare you say such things to me? would I not die for my Nest?"

"There is no occasion to do so, my dear fellow."

"I order you to open the door, Elmore; you are taking too much upon you."

"Wait until I get my breath, boy, you were so heavy, I'll explain everything."

"It requires no explanation. I desire to be instantly restored to my wife's room."

"What for?"

"That I may see her, hear her, help her."

"You were not helping, you were only groaning in the corner, and making her worse. Besides, the doctor ordered you out."

"What doctor?"

"Dr. M."

"He had no earthly right to do so; suppose I lose my Nest, my wife?"

"Then you will have to thank yourself and your mother for it."

"How, Elmore?"

"Why, if she dies, you will be murderers, both of you."

"Good heavens! Elmore, what have I done, that you should drive me thus mad? Do you mean this illness is owing to Nest's fretting about her child?"

"Of course, joined to Nature having provided her with nutriment for it, which, not being applied to its natural purpose, has flown to her head, and caused this fever."

"But my mother told me it was not customary—"

"Pray, how long have you made your mother your criterion of maternal duties?"

"But she seemed to think it quite extraordinary in one of Nest's rank"—

"All I know, is," interrupted Elmore, "if

the Duchess of Nairn does not perform all such duties by my children, I'll divorce her."

"My God! what a fool I have been."

"Never said anything truer, Frank."

"Oh, Elmore! pity me now, I have recovered my senses."

"It is a pity you did not do so sooner, for Nest's sake."

"And she implored me in such moving terms."

"Yes, and you in your wisdom judged your mother showed stronger maternal interests than Nest."

"How came you here, Elmore?"

"Mimi, being more sensible of the difference between her mother and your child's mother, galloped across country for my mother, and I went to York for the doctor."

"Oh! Elmore, I sink with horror, when I think of you all, and I her own husband, adoring, loving, doating on her, being such a senseless dolt."

"Very true; if she dies, you will have to thank yourself."

"Cruel, cruel monster! Don't you know that if she dies, I am lost, lost for ever, now and eternally? Oh! Elmore, if you only knew what she is to me."

"I have a pretty good idea, Frank. But, however, if you will promise to remain here, I will go up and hear what the doctor says."

"Oh! Elmore, may I not go up too, just to hear her voice, look at her?"

"Then I will not stir, or unlock the door."

"Go, go, I promise," said Frank.

CHAPTER XVII.

Doctor M., after Lord Gomer's exit, had gone to speak to the nurse.

"You have been giving your Lady some narcotic?"

"A little composing draught; Lady Jane thought—"

"What has Lady Jane to do with your duties? you knew it would be almost certain death."

"Here are the remains of it, Sir," said Seaworth; "I saved it, thinking the two between them might be poisoning my Lady."

The nurse looked daggers at Seaworth, who retorted swords unmistakeably.

"What made you wish to give Lady Gomer this strong dose?"

"She was very excited, Sir."

"What about?"

"She wanted to nurse her baby, and my Lady Jane would not—"

"Now I'll tell you what, if anything happens to Lady Gomer, I'll have both you and Lady Jane taken up for murder! Do you know of any one we could get as nurse?"

"Oh, yes," said Seaworth, whom he addressed; "Maggie is down in the rose-garden, and she was my Lord's nurse."

"Then pack up, Mrs. Teake, and begone," said the doctor.

Mrs. Teake was beginning to bluster and fume, and then the doctor firmly grasped her arm.

"Can I rely on you?" he said to Seaworth.

"Sir, if it will benefit my Lady to put my two hands into that fire, order me, and see if I do not do it."

"Then see this woman out of the house in five minutes, without a noise; and, Mrs. Teake, if you take my advice, you will put a few hundred miles between you and Gomer, for I will keep my word about having you up for murder."

Returning into the bed-room, "I fear," he said, "we must sacrifice all this beautiful hair. Do you think it will annoy or vex her?"

"I am sure not," said the Duchess; "may I ask her?"

"Yes, do."

"Nessie, my darling, do you care to have your hair cut off?"

"No, mother, no; are you my mother? you are so good; I was a mother. Take my hair, and make a winding-sheet of it, for my little baby. Besides, it is heavy, and wearies me. I want sea-weed to wind round my head. Mo-

ther, may I have some? You are the mother that I have lived so long without, and now I am dead, I have found her. Well, that is a great, a wonderful blessing; but, oh! mother, I have lost my child—my little child!"

"No, my darling, you have not; I have got your child safe, only he sleeps."

Nest looked into her eyes with stedfast earnestness, and then smiling with ineffable serenity, said, "I believe you, I know I am ill, do with me what you like."

"This will save her life, dear madam," said the good doctor, in a glow of pleasure; "such strength of mind and composure is everything to us. I would rather have lost a leg, than commit such sacrilege as this," lifting up the long sweeping curls, and carrying them into the next room. There he found the Duke, who shuddered as he saw the masses of dark hair.

"I have every hope, my Lord Duke; but, in in an hour's time, I shall be able to speak with

certainty; keep my Lord away, her reason depends upon it."

The Duke still lingering, the doctor left him. Hastily gathering a single dark tress, the Duke rolled it up, and put it into his pocket; then taking up a handful, he returned to Frank, saying, "I have good news for you, my dear boy, and here is something for you and your mother to remember this business by."

Frank uttered a low cry of agony, as he recognised the precious, lovely hair.

"Oh! my Nest, my Nest, losing your hair, and all through my fault."

"Well! it's a cheap sacrifice, if it saves her life."

"But it is so beautiful; it is so matchless in colour and length."

"Man! what is her hair, in comparison to her life?"

"True, too true. I am a dolt and fool; but, Elmore, how can you tear my heart thus? I could not think you would be so unkind."

"I have a purpose in it, my dear boy," said the Duke, kindly; "I would not have this sad time pass in the usual evanescent manner that things generally do with you. I wish it to stamp its experience on your mind, to your benefit, and for the sake of your poor wife. I think you can now be safely left, and I want to go and see Mimi. So, Frank, take this hair, and look at it; matchless as it is, it is not so matchless as your wife; and by the weak folly of a boy, you have nearly lost her. In her wild, unconscious ravings, you might have heard the gentlest, mildest upbraidings, for the sad life you have lately led her. Pray to God, Frank, for strength to do your duty as a man, a husband, and a master; send these meddling, foolish people away, and let her associate with those worthy of her. Clear your house as soon as possible, and when your wife comes down stairs again (if ever she does), let her find herself acknowledged mistress; let her be unharassed by mean, contemptible bickerings;

let her find you the staff all wives ought to find their husbands; and then, Frank, then, you will lead a life—a life—that I, for one, shall envy you."

The Duke sighed heavily, but with increased solemnity he laid his hand on Frank's arm, and said,

"Pray, think, reason—on your knees humble yourself before God. In an hour I will return."

At the end of the hour, the Duchess called her son.

"She sleeps, Elmore, sleeps calmly, like a lovely child. A sweet dew is on her brow. Let her wake calm and rational from this sleep, and she is saved! Oh! Elmore, what a pearl of price she is; I could not feel more, if it had been you, my dear, my blessed son. Can you forgive me for so saying?"

"Forgive you! mother; yes, truly."

When Nest awoke from her lengthened slumber, she looked alarmed and frightened,

but smiled as she saw the Duchess, and said faintly, "Dear aunt."

"What do you fear, my darling, that you look so alarmed?"

"There is a woman here, I do not like."

"She is gone, dear; we have sent her away. Maggie has got your boy—Here, Maggie, show him."

Tears of joy ran down the now white face of the young mother.

"Thank God for me, dear aunt; I am so weak."

The Duchess knelt down, and prayed aloud. Then Maggie put the little red baby down to its mother's lips, and Nest murmured, "I am happy."

From that time, her convalescence was quick, and it was hardly possible to say which felt the most happiness; Frank, as he carried her down stairs for the first time, the doctor rushing every where, to see there were no draughts; the Duchess, carrying a cushion; or Seaworth

bearing an unlimited number of wraps. I think it was Mimi following with the baby. Perhaps it might be Lady Jane, as she greeted Nest on her arrival to the drawing-room sofa, (not having seen her since the episode of the narcotic,) with,—

"Good morning, my dear! I hope you find yourself rather better."

Then looking at Mimi, she continued,—

"Pray, Amelia, what have you there?"

"My god-son, mamma."

"A baby, child! take it away; you know I never allow such things down stairs."

"Fortunately, he has more right here than you, mamma. At all events, here he is going to remain; and if you don't like it, mamma, why, you know, you can—ahem!"

(Ah! Mimi, Mimi, in your flush of happiness, it was not well thus to forget your duty to your mother, and so you will discover; Lady Jane has not left the room, with the dark line so vividly pourtrayed on her brow, for nothing;

she will make you repent this sauciness, Miss Mimi, happy and unconcerned as you now look, while on your knees before your god-son, you make him coo, as he watches your clustering curls dance on your blooming cheeks.)

CHAPTER XVIII.

But notwithstanding this quick and favourable recovery, it was deemed politic on all sides, to complete it—Nest must go to the sea-side.

Coadmore, of course. Was she not dying to show her baby to that dearest granny, who had been father, mother, everything to Nest? She did not think it could thrive and live, until it had the blessing of those aged lips; that pious, purified heart.

We must confess that Nest was not perfect.

She had a weakness, and that weakness was her baby.

It was this, perhaps, that made her not so sensitive as she otherwise would have been, to Mimi's agony—(it could be expressed by no other word); she was not permitted to accompany them.

Though warned by past experience, that getting into a rage only made her mother more happy, and more determined to have her own way; yet she felt with peculiar pain, that she owed this new disappointment to her unlucky speech about the baby. That dear child, her own god-son, whom she could tend and nurse all day; she was to be separated from him a whole month. And though, at his tender age, his little sins would not swell to any great amount, she felt it would be injustice to her sponsor's right, if he throve and grew, without her watchful care.

Accustomed to Mimi's violent outbreaks, Nest, perhaps, was not aware of the bitter feel-

ings she was hiding under a cloak of unconcern.

"You will write to me. Oh! Nest, if you love me, write constantly," vibrated on Nest's ears the whole of the journey, certainly; and she felt uneasy whenever she remembered the heart's agony with which these words broke from her. And when her young son was welcomed so joyously by all her tenantry and people, though she had her happy husband by her side, she cast back many a thought of fond regret at her darling Mimi's absence.

Frank had so far profited by his recent distress of mind, and the fearful loss he had nearly sustained, as to give his mother regular notice to quit. Certainly such a spasm of pain crossed her face as he told her that he would place his house of Kirkly at her disposal, that his kind heart might have relented. But not five minutes before, that lovely head, shorn of its beautiful hair, had been lying on his shoulder; and the remembrance of that, made his

heart feel strong and stout enough to have handed his mother out of the house on the instant.

But twenty work-people were immediately placed at Lady Jane's disposal, to prepare Kirkly according to her own wishes; and though twice twenty were shortly required, and improvements made, as if she was determined to make her absence felt in some way; a month passed, and yet Lady Jane shewed no symptoms of an actual move.

On the contrary, she recalled Sir John, Lady, and Miss West, who had had the decency to go to their own house, during Lady Gomer's illness, and she added to these, several rather questionable acquaintances of Mr. Malcolm's.

Thus, when Frank came home to help his mother to move, ere his wife returned, he found his house rather more full than usual, and Lady Jane thinking as much about going, as the oldest and most respectable of the pyramids of visiting her.

Mimi looked deplorably ill, and as wretched as possible; and though Lady Jane told her brother that she kept Mimi with her, as through her strenuous and untiring exertions she had no doubt Amelia would be Duchess of Nairn, Frank could see through the shallow artifice directly.

In fact, the whole state of affairs at home shocked him. The company that were there, he could hardly expect good and respectable servants to wait upon; his mother's irritable and angry mood; his eldest sister's flagrant conduct, and his youngest sister's unhappiness, all made him long to return to Coadmore, and bring back the gentle creature, who breathed a balm of peace and happiness on all around her.

But he had promised Elmore so faithfully, that when Nest did return, it should be home, indeed, to her; no angry spirit to mar its hallowed precincts; no bitter, mocking tongue to jar on each home-like feeling; and yet, in despair, he acknowledged to himself, that his

mother seemed to have fixed herself at Gomer, more firmly than ever.

Meanwhile, Nest had recovered both strength and spirits in her native air; her boy throve and grew. When Frank left her, to go and prepare Gomer for her return; she clung to her grandame's side with greater fondness than ever, feeling as if this would be the last time that she could hold the intercourse of past years with her first earthly friend.

"Well, my pet, you are regaining your colour once more," said the old lady to her, as she sat gazing on her baby lying on the venerable knee; "but you are grave, my darling."

"I was thinking, granny, how little one appreciates the happy season of youth; no care, no sorrow—all thoughts of the future riding on rose-coloured clouds of hope!"

"You are yet in your youth, my Nessie; and yet even my aged eyes can see that the cares of an older age are on you."

"It is not so much for myself, granny, but

for others. I think we have yet something to undergo and fear from Lady Jane, and I dread her power of reprisal. She knows well how to make my husband's frank, generous heart shrink and quail, under bitter words; and, granny, I hold it so mean and shocking a thing to contend with a spirit like hers."

"My child, you are bitter; at least, for you."

"Then scold me, granny; I feel I want some of the essence of your heaven-looking nature upon me. I feel, too, that I may have some ill-will in my heart, because I have failed to make her love me, failed to do the good I intended, failed to help my husband and sister, as I hoped to do."

"My Nest, you expected to do too much; in pious watchfulness and prayer, sow your seed; do not doubt but that God will bring it to perfection."

"I own to being disheartened, granny, not

so much, that I do not feel within me the power still to endure all things for him I love; but I know this can now no longer be done, in love and amity. If we wish to become those proper, shining lights, that people in our station ought to try to be, we must break seriously, and for ever, with my husband's mother; granny, this shocks me!"

"My child, if it is for the well-being of your husband, thank God if you can do it."

"But I am a mother; and can a blessing rest upon those who break through such sacred ties?"

"I feel, my one blessing, that in tying you, so young, to such hard duties, I gave no happiness to your young life; but I feel equally sure, that, with God's help, you are not powerless. Your husband's happiness is your first care; children and parents must give way, before such a tie."

"I feel it so, in my heart. Pray to God for

me, my dearest granny; and pray that I may bring up my little son to love his mother, not to fear her."

"I would not have you low and disheartened, Nest. God did not bestow on you a gracious, enduring spirit, for no exercise to be given it. My child, my child! I rushed into the snare. I thought it well for her; must her young heart swell with sorrow only fitted for grey heads? Must her gentle spirit droop with cares fitted only for the bold, strong heart? My God! have mercy on her. Remember thy many and manifold promises—'As thy day is, so shall thy strength be.' Thanks be to God for his unspeakable mercies."

Nest had removed her baby from the aged knee, while she listened with pious awe to her grandmother's murmured prayers on her behalf. With closed eyes, and clasped hands, it was a custom of the aged Christian to lift up her spirit to her Maker, at all times, and hours of the day. Sometimes, worn with her

spirit's communings, she sank into the slumber of a little child; sometimes, as if renovated and strengthened by her soul's food, the aged frame would rejoice in increased vigour of mind and body.

It was after a conversation such as this, that Nest received the following letter from her husband:

"My Nest,

"I have now left you a fortnight, and yet I cannot discover that my mother is at all nearer her departure than when I came. She drives over constantly to Kirkly, and I have been with her; the house is not only in complete order for her reception, but fires are always lighted in every room. Yet she has removed nothing from Gomer, and says nothing about going.

"This tantalizing state of things has kept me here day after day, and may be, perhaps, one reason, dearest, that I have received no

letter from you for some days. I imagine you expect me to return, and so have not written.

"I write now to propose that we wait this uncomfortable state of things no longer. I cannot live without my angel near me; I already feel miserable, and harassed, unlike the being I am near you. And our poor Mimi! it really breaks my heart, when I catch but one glimpse of her sorrowful face at the window. My mother will not let her speak or associate with any one, under the plea, that it is Elmore's wish. He certainly said, that the company now in the house were quite unfit for her to associate with; and so they are. But that should not prevent her intercourse with me. Nevertheless, I do not like to make a stir about it, lest it should be visited on the poor girl's head.

"But, my wife! my pure and lovely one! how can I tell you about Augusta? she shocks and disgusts me, and my mother will hear no

reason on the matter. Sir John is away, which disturbs me. My mother says, darling, that he is in Wales. I have besought her to write to him, or to give me his direction. She is mysterious about that; where can he be, my wife? If you should hear or see anything of him, tell him to come to me instantly. My mother says, they married without her permission, and she does not care if they are unhappy. My Nest, do you not pity us, with such a mother? I can pursue this subject no further, it makes me almost mad.

"Write to me, my own; write and tell me what you think we had better do. Elmore is away in town, my aunt visiting her son Frederick, our dear little granny is wilder and more unhappy than I am, and says, 'Send for Pearl, Pearl alone can help us!' I think as she does. You must let me come to you, my wife, at Coadmore, and we must leave Gomer to its fate; or return here, for mine and Mimi's

sake, even though my mother remains. My Nest, my love, my wife! your adoring, but unhappy husband."

Nest's first impulse on reading this letter, was to take leave of her beloved old friend, and return, answering Frank's letter in person; but it was so extremely desirable that he should settle all matters between himself and his mother without her interference, that her better judgment prompted her to write.

Should Lady Jane's removal only be caused by Nest's interference, and not be her son's own act and deed, Nest felt that years would not remove the incubus; that, probably, nothing would free them from her. She, therefore, wrote both to her husband and Mimi, long, loving, fond letters, all from the heart; all portraying her ardent wish to be with them; but gently urging Frank to be firm, in requiring his mother's departure; yet hoping

that either he would come for her, in a week's time, or suffer her to return home.

She anxiously waited an answer to these letters, but received none, even at the end of a week.

Nevertheless, the post brought her letters, wihch flushed her cheek with anger. She read the first one, and then threw it instantly in the fire; and ever after, she would scrutinize the seal and post-mark of her letters, and, Miss Williams observed, would constantly throw one aside, not only unread, but unopened. The seal was always the same.

Besides, there was another cause of anxiety; she felt certain, that in her walks, some person followed her, that she could not move even a short distance from the house — nay, not further than the garden, without being painfully aware a spy was watching her. From the peculiar situation of the garden, it could be well known from half the hill-side that she

was there; or she could be seen coming out of the house.

Then Nest would imagine, with nervous fear, that even the short moments she allowed herself there, watchful eyes were upon her from beneath some gorse bush.

As the last day of the week approached, she gave orders for packing up, and her cheek recovered its bloom, and her eyes their light, when she thought that the next day would see her on the road to her husband. At all risks, whether Lady Jane was there or not, it was better to be with Frank, than endure such suspense.

CHAPTER XIX.

Nest was awakened in the night, by a strange noise. Sitting up to listen better, she became convinced they were groans that she heard. Hastily springing up, and putting on her dressing-gown, she flew to her grandmother's room. A startling peal of the bell, aroused the whole house, and when Miss Williams entered the room, she found Nest lying, half-fainting, on the old lady's bed, who was evidently struck with paralysis.

Hasty summons for medical men, confusion, grief, and dismay; all those sad concomitants

of a sudden illness, pervaded the house. After many hours of protracted hope, the doctors pronounced their patient rallying, though still in the greatest danger.

Nest wrote off a hasty letter to her husband, beseeching his presence to comfort and assist her; and then, in the speedy hope of his arrival, proceeded to devote herself to that kind, but now insensible heart, that had done the same for her, when a little weak, wailing babe, without a relative in the world, without a claim upon her. Yet no mother ever tended her child with more care, and had striven to do her duty by her.

In watching her grandmother's slow but apparently sure progress towards recovery, Nest was hardly aware how quickly the time flew; a week had passed, and yet no Frank, no letter, but the obnoxious ones.

"I must leave her; yes, she told me so herself," thought Nest, "all relations must give way to my husband. Though she knows me,

and feels I am by her side; though her heart blesses me, when her tongue is mysteriously bound by the hand of God, I must leave her. She loves the sound of my voice, as I read the Holy Book to her; she follows me, with her eye, as I move from one side of the bed to the other; yet I must leave her. Oh! Frank, Frank, I must love you, thus to leave my first, and for long, only earthly friend, on, perhaps, her dying bed for you. I must leave her, yet do not think I blame you, my Frank; bitter as is this drop, you are making me swallow. I know your guileless nature; I know it is not your fault, that you do not come to share with your Nest this holy and righteous, though painful work. May God forgive me, if for his sake, I thus abandon my first friend."

Nest wept bitterly; and with such a warm, grateful, loving heart, how could it be otherwise?

After devoting some few minutes to her sorrow, she rose to give once more the direc-

tions for her journey, when a letter was given her. How it came, the servant could not tell; it contained but a few words.

"LITTLE SISTER,

"Come home; the angel spirit having left Gomer, evil demons have taken possession of it, and riot rules there. Besides, Frank has met with a little—a very slight accident, which need not alarm you, but serves Lady Jane's purpose, in keeping him from you.

"Your brother,

ELMORE."

Though alarmed for her Frank, her heart was cheered at this almost command for her presence. Her leaving her grandmother, though dying, and going to Frank, was become an imperative duty.

She gave her orders with alacrity; explained all her wishes to Miss Williams, who fully entered into them, and then took her station

by her dying friend's side, determined not again to leave it until her carriage was at the door.

But she was not destined to fulfil this resolution, for Miss Williams shortly came and told her a person earnestly requested to see her.

She went down reluctantly, but had hardly entered the drawing-room door, when she felt herself clasped in the arms of a muffled figure.

Between sobbing, crying, and hysterics, Nest recognized Mimi's voice.

"Oh, Mimi! Frank, Frank! what of him? Where is he? I implore you, tell me of him," she cried.

"He is well—he is quite well—his accident is nothing. Mamma keeps him a prisoner, to please herself. He does not know I am here. I only have to do with this business. Hush, hush! dearest, sweetest, loveliest Nest, how you sob; I would have borne anything, sooner than you should suffer like this. Frank is well. The doctor allows he need not attend him. I

would not, could not, look you thus in the face, and say otherwise."

"But why, why are you here, Mimi? what has happened?"

"You never wrote to me, Nest."

"I did, indeed, my Mimi; but I have been so unhappy, at neither hearing from you or Frank."

"Then mamma is at the bottom of it all. For her own whims, she pretends Frank is so ill. Now I feel much happier; she must just take the consequence of her own doings. I have only received one letter from you, Nest, since you left, six weeks ago."

"I have written to you, Mimi, twice a week regularly, and to Frank every day, with messages enclosed to you."

"I cannot tell whether Frank has had his or not, for I have been locked up, and allowed to speak to no one."

"Then, Mimi, you have—"

"Yes, Nest."

"But what? my darling."

"Just what you mean, my own Nest."

"But I said nothing, Mimi."

"Well! I did it, however. I don't care what you call it, or how it is to be expressed."

"Eloped, Mimi?"

"Yes, if you like; or ran away, if you think that more appropriate."

"I am only too happy to have you, dear; and now, I promise you faithfully, we will part no more. I shall consider your happiness quite mixed up with Frank's and mine."

"But, Nest—"

"Yes, dear—"

"I eloped, you said."

"Yes, or ran away, whichever we liked to call it."

"And you are not angry?"

"Dearest, no. How can I feel angry at any thing that brings you to me?"

"But you quite understand that I eloped? Nest, you will not understand."

"I do, dearest, I do; you came away without your mother's leave."

"Is that all that people do, when they elope?" said Mimi, looking beseechingly at her sister.

"Mimi!" said Nest, flushing up, "are you alone?"

"No," said Mimi, in the faintest whisper.

"Tell me all, Mimi; confide all to your sister."

"I am married."

Nest sat motionless. Hiding her face in her lap, Mimi poured out her tale of wrongs and sorrows, and it needed little skill on Nest's part to fill all the blanks in her narrative.

"She was so cruel and unjust to him, she would not let him go to Elmore. I could not bear to see him suffer. I knew it would vex her more than anything; but, he says, I was

wrong to marry him, with such a motive in my heart, and he will not have a wife's love on such terms. We are married; but from the church-door, we have come straight to you, to be guided by your wishes and judgment. He has a noble and generous heart; he is not to blame so much as I am. Tortured by my mother, forgotten by you, spoken to by no one, without a companion or friend in the world, I thought no one would care what became of me, and I thought I would put an insurmountable bar between my mother and me. She will never want to associate with her page's wife, I know."

Nest uttered a cry, as the fatal fact was confirmed by Mimi's lips.

In a whirlwind of rage, revenge, and every bitter feeling, mixed up with that quixotic generosity of character, that so often accompanies hasty and passionate tempers, she had eloped with Alphonso; or, rather Hugh, her

mother's page. To indemnify him for the sufferings she made him endure, nothing sufficed Mimi, but to marry him.

"He is here, here at the door; now waiting your wishes. Whatever you like us to do, we mean to abide by. If, shocked and angry at my conduct, you throw me off, then, Nest, I shall follow his fortunes all over the world. He is different to what he seems; I am not so lost to every right and proper feeling, as to have married a man unworthy of my affections. He is not a common man, nor a common character; speak to him, for my sake; speak to him. Oh, Nest! spurn me not, for you know not what I have suffered. Oh, Nest! I am young and helpless; and worse than that, for I am the slave of a weak and wayward temper. Have pity on me, Nest! If I had had your letters, if I had had one solitary ray of comfort, this would never have happened."

This was but a tithe of all that Mimi

poured forth, and her sister's tender heart, though shocked and dismayed, melted under the imploring words, the beseeching looks, of the distressed girl. Mimi had not kissed her, or indulged in any of her usual demonstrations of affection. As she paused, exhausted, in one of her speeches, Nest stooped and kissed her on the forehead. With a cry of delight, the over-excited, agitated girl sunk fainting on the floor.

Her cry had been heard; for the door opening suddenly, Mimi was lifted from the ground by a person whom Nest had some difficulty in recognising as Hugh.

While she gazed at him in astonishment, he poured forth the wildest, most incoherent rhapsody of terror, over the insensible Mimi, that it was possible for tongue to utter.

"She is dead! she is killed! gentlest, dearest, sweetest lady, would that I had died for thee, would that I could do so. I knew

it would kill her! I felt it was impossible that I could ever own thee as mine! Oh, madam! have mercy, she is slain with unkindness; could you be cruel to one like her? I alone am to blame. I only ought to suffer. If you are not good to her, madam, I know she must die! I will go away; I will leave her; I will promise never to see her more, if you will but promise to be as you were to her. Dearest, fairest, sweetest angel, oh! that I could die for thee."

"I promise, I promise," said Nest; "see! she is recovering; she has only fainted."

"Then, madam, take her; she does not know how I love her; I never presumed, oh, madam! I never before even held her in my arms; I have ever studiously worshipped her, but at a distance. Take her, madam, into your arms; I would not have her recover, and find herself in mine; for, believe me, madam, though a ceremony has passed between us

(she would have it so), I must deserve her love, and work for it, before I presume to ask a return. If you would but permit me to tell you all, and what she has suffered—"

"I will," said Nest; "wait outside for a short time, until she is better, and I can leave her, and I will hear all you wish to say."

"The great God, who sees all our hearts, love and reward you, madam. I am prepared to abide by your decision, even, yes, even should it be that I am never to see her more! that is, if it is for her good."

Nest called Seaworth, and placing Mimi under her kind and active care, she went with Hugh at once into the study.

Then, if she had been before astonished at the extreme beauty of his personal appearance, in his gentleman's costume, she was yet more amazed at the refined, noble sentiments he uttered, the language in which he spoke, his devoted love, and self-abandonment!

"I cannot think, madam, how I presumed first to love Miss Gomer; but it was long before you came amongst us. She was so much to be pitied; so neglected, so forlorn, and I was the same; we pitied each other. But, though all my happiness went, madam, when you came—for her dear eyes were then opened to many things—she, and neither had ever considered, though I wept tears of agony at my loss, though I endured tortures no language can describe, dear lady—believe me, I blessed the hand that made her so happy, and gave her pleasures and thoughts she had never been suffered to feel before. But fate again threw her on me, a poor page! to give her all the sympathy and help, her clinging, affectionate nature required; and then, madam, she was so ill-used, coerced, threatened, irritated, and, at last, driven wild by cruel unkindness; then, in the wild fit, she would make me, ah! the most honoured, happiest of God's

creatures! But for one thing. It may be, madam, she insisted on this act through revenge. And I love her too well, idolize her too greatly, to permit this sacrifice; I have brought her to you; I will leave her with you. Though, in the eyes of God, I am her husband, God forbid that I should claim that title, unless I have her affections too."

Nest was profoundly affected, and laying her hand upon his arm, she looked up into his face, with all her simple, noble character beaming in her eyes—

"You are a good young man. I can say no more than this, that Lord Gomer's best gratitude is due to God, that his sister has fallen into such hands. You must give me time to think; to-morrow, I will let you know what I judge best. Meantime, make your heart easy, on the score, at least, of my dear sister. I will make her happiness my own. Now go and rest, and God reward you for what you

have done. I am so young myself, so inexperienced, I must think; I must have time to consider."

He respectfully kissed the hand she had laid upon his arm; but it was done so gracefully, so gratefully, such profound feeling and pathos were expressed in the act, she felt more touched than ever.

Nevertheless, when he had retired, and she took her place again by her grandmother's side, she could not but feel that Mimi must have been mad to act as she had done.

She shuddered to think what Frank would feel on such an occasion; for Lady Jane, she had no compassion to spare, nothing but indignation left to bestow on her. It was her own act and deed, her own doing. But, alas! Mimi would be the victim of her mother's ill-judged conduct. Frank, also, would suffer through her. All the night, schemes she had pictured to herself, of their mutual happiness

together, seemed now for ever gone. Mimi had placed a bar between herself and the station into which she had been born. Uprightly as the young man seemed to have acted, noble and fine as were his sentiments, he was, after all, but a page, originally a gipsy-boy! Nothing could overcome that fact.

Nest's heart was truly heavy; for, absorbed as she might be, and was, with Mimi's sad fate, an undefined dread of some misfortune hanging over her, in which her Frank was concerned, oppressed her with a weight almost beyond bearing; and then she looked upon the motionless, aged, dying frame before her.

Could fate have decreed her a task so bitterly painful, as to leave this beloved, revered, valued friend, at that time and period, when mortal cares were so wanting; when, perhaps, it was the last, only earthly kindness, she could

bestow upon her? Nest lived an age of cares that night; and who could go through such an ordeal without being purified in the flame thereof?

CHAPTER XX.

The early morning showed Nest earnest and determined to do her duty. Though no sleep had visited her eyes, she felt strengthened and refreshed by that night of prayer, spent by her grandmother's dying bed.

Early in the morning, she sent for Mr. Llewellyn, her steward, and confiding Hugh to his care, she begged him to employ him as one of the superintendents of the slate quarries.

To this Mr. Llewellyn joyfully acceded; and, without being at all aware of the real state

of the case, he gave some small comfort to Nest's heart, by saying, "No act you could have done, my lady, would be more pleasing to me. I was just wanting such a young man· I am getting very old, myself; and if I can have Mr. Leonard with me for a year or two, I'll make him quite fit to take my place, and then I shall die in some peace and comfort."

She then visited Mimi, who all night long had lain feverish and wakeful on the sofa in Nest's room.

"You will come with me, darling," murmured Nest.

"Never."

"You said you would do what I asked, Mimi," said Nest, mournfully.

"I have no home," said Mimi, sulkily.

"I am going to Frank, to-day, Mimi, and I thought you would come with me, so far, as far as Laurel Grove, Mimi."

"I should like to go to my grandmamma,"

said Mimi, listlessly; "yes, I think that is a good plan. But he—"

"Hugh remains here, with Mr. Llewellyn. There is some business here, for him to do, Mimi."

"Such as he would like, no servant's place?" said Mimi, haughtily.

"No, dearest, certainly not; Mr. Llewellyn wants a clever, active young man, to superintend our slate quarries. Hugh is just fitted for it; he likes him; he is to be his partner, his friend; he will treat him as a son."

"Do with me as you like, Nest. Thank God. Yes, yes, I thank God; I thank you. Nest, you are yet to be my guide and helper. I will go anywhere; I am ready—come."

"In an hour, Mimi, I shall be ready. Do you not know my dearest Granny is ill up stairs, on her dying bed, perhaps?"

"Is she? Oh! Frank; what have you

and I not to answer for, tormenting our Nest at such a time? I can say nothing; do nothing; Nest, I am helpless. Order me as you will. May I see him before I go?"

"Assuredly, Mimi; I am going now to take a last leave of my more than mother. Go and see Hugh."

"No, you must be present; I will wait here with my little god-son, until you say you are ready."

Nest went into the sick room, clothed in her travelling-dress. The dim eyes lighted up as she approached.

"Mother! mother! the only mother I ever knew; I must leave you; I have to tear myself away, when I would watch every breath you draw—every turn of your eye. Mother, forgive me; it is for him, my Frank—my husband."

Nest buried her head in the bed-clothes, convulsed with agony.

With a violent effort, the dying woman laid her withered hand on that loveliest head, and feebly from her aged lips came the words, "Nessie, go." She raised herself; with one long, lingering kiss, she tore herself away. She knew what those lips would have said, could they have spoken more; she knew the prayers that would have been offered, to sanctify her departure; she felt all sacredly within her heart, as if she had heard them from mortal lips. What seemed a desertion, was now a duty; what appeared a cruel, selfish act, was now a holy one. With a heart strengthened by those two words, that last command, Nest passed from the chamber of her earliest, dearest, best friend, knowing that she should never see her more on earth.

She took her baby from its nurse's arms, and going to Mimi, said, "Come, we are ready."

Mimi obeyed her, and Nest led the way into a small study, where Hugh was seated,

his head buried in his hands. Mimi, struck with the agony depicted on Nest's face, exerted herself.

"Hugh, we are going; my sister takes me to my grandmother. You are to stay here, and work for our best friend. You think, perhaps, I insisted upon the marriage ceremony passing between us, because I wished to revenge myself upon my mother. It may be so; at present, I cannot think, so as to form any judgment of what is right or wrong. But, Hugh, this I know, that I would not have let the marriage words pass between us, if I had loved any man as I do you. We will submit to that gentle angel's commands, whatever they may be; but in what is to befall us for the future, remember, I am no man's wife but yours. I will either hold to my maiden name of Gomer, or take that of yours, as being my only friend and stay, in my hour of need and trouble."

Hugh had fallen on one knee, as she

addressed him, and kissed the hand she held out to him, at every sentence. But when she said he alone possessed her affections, he sprang to his feet, and clasping her in his arms, he waited but her ceasing to speak, to utter the love and adoration he bore her.

He wanted but that assurance, to make him all she wished him to be. No sleep should visit his eyes, unless he passed the day making himself worthy of such affection; no food should touch his lips, if his conscience told him he had not thought of her as his load-star of life. And as for the gentle angel, who was, in her magnanimous and generous nature, so lenient to their fault, she had only to command to be obeyed. Whatever might be his fate, that of Mimi could not but be safe in her charge.

Seeing the wan, sickly smile that was passing over poor Nest's face, Mimi withdrew herself from the arms that would hardly

unclasp to release her, and saying, "Farewell! Hugh, farewell!" drew Nest away.

They entered the carriage, but were many miles on their way, ere either had voice to speak.

CHAPTER XXI.

They approached Laurel Grove, and in the glad prospect of meeting a kind, loving heart, Mimi had no shame, Nest no fear. The little grandmother was in the doorway as they drove up.

"I heard the wheels, I knew what it was. I thought my Pearl would bring her, she is to be my child now. My little golden-haired Mimi, whatever you have done, I forgive it. You are like my Frank; my first Frank, ruined, undone, lost as he was, did not kindness melt him, would not soft words turn him? I am

kind, I wish to be kind. Whatever you have done, my child, remember I am your grandmother. I love you—confide in me—tell me every thing—tell me the worst sins. I don't care, I love you; you are mine. My Frank's child is my child. Shall be treated with kindness and love; no harsh word shall she hear, no unkind scoffs and gibes. Here is your room, your own room, all ready. And you, my Pearl, my precious, matchless Pearl, it is late, I know, but go on, go home, go and save my second Frank. People think I know nothing; but I do, and I get very angry, only I am a Christian. I am very, very angry at present, I am malicious; I am not safe; I feel a raging wild beast, but I am better now I have seen you, my Pearl, and that I have got my Mimi. I begin to feel more of a Christian. So go, my sweetest dear, go. I see by your eye, my Frank is saved. I see bitter grief, but stern determination. Go, my best blessing and the blessing of the Almighty God be

on you. I knew how it would be, I was quite prepared."

One silent kiss passed between the sisters; but as Nest placed herself once more in the carriage, Mimi sprung forward: "I am happy, dear heart; I am grateful! God love you, my sister!"

Nest, fearing the glare and turmoil of her arrival would awaken her baby, at that hour of night, for it was about nine o'clock, had desired the carriage to draw up at a small postern gate, which led up, by a private staircase, to her own suite of apartments.

Though clearly not expected, the glad tidings of her arrival spread rapidly amongst the servants, who flocked to welcome her, and prepare her rooms, with the utmost expedition.

She sent Seaworth, to bid Jervois tell her husband of her arrival, while she laid the sleeping baby down, and prepared to take off her wraps.

"Oh! my lady," said Seaworth, running in

hastily, "if you will excuse Jervois taking such a liberty, he hopes, my lady, you will go down at once to the inner drawing-room. My Lord is there, and Lady Jane, and Miss West, and there is something very unpleasant going on, and my Lord is in such a taking."

All this time the good Seaworth had been hurrying off with her lady's wraps, smoothing her white collar over her dark travelling dress, and then arranged the black-lace veil, that Nest generally wore on her head, to cover the thick, rebellious curls, that clustered short and close all over it.

In a few minutes Nest was running down stairs, with such a beating heart, that she hardly noticed Jervois, waiting with the handle of the door in his hand, neither did she perceive that he noiselessly opened it, and, without announcing her, as noiselessly shut it, while her light step on the thick velvet carpet was equally unheard.

Frank was lying back in a large arm-chair, his hand covering his face; his mother stood before him, speaking vehemently; Augusta was by the fire-place; while Miss West sat on a stool so close to Lord Gomer's chair, that her head leant against it.

Nest paused in the middle of the room, not so much from any wish to hear what they were saying, but to gain breath, after her quick flight down stairs. She seemed to feel she would need some, ere she entered into converse with Lady Jane.

"How blind, how infatuated you must be, not to see the matter as I have placed it before you," said Lady Jane.

"I do not, cannot see it; if it had not been for the sad business about Mimi, I should be already on my road, to learn the cause of her strange silence."

"The letters I have given you, blind and foolish boy, explain enough! And my poor

Augusta! she is to be the victim of an unprincipled husband, and a deceitful, hypocritical girl!"

"Mother!" said Frank, in a voice of thunder, rising from his chair, with his face inflamed with rage, and advancing towards her, like one possessed, "say such words again; utter such sentiments of the purest, most spotless creature on earth; and, mad as I have been the last few days, no rage my father ever got into, no act he ever did, shall equal mine to you! yes, you; you who call yourself my mother—"

"Hush!" said a soft voice by his side, as a little cool hand was placed on his lips; "hush, Frank! a son must not speak so to his mother."

"My Nest!" He wrapped her in his arms, he kissed the noble white brow, the little trembling hand, and, with a deep, long-relieved sigh, he returned to his chair, and

sitting down, she, still encircled by his grasp, sat on the arm of the chair, by his side.

And they both looked full at Lady Jane—she tried to look back scorn and defiance.

But even her hard heart was touched at the change in her son One moment before, rage and anger in his countenance, despair and agony in his heart, a madman's fury in his actions; and now, with that low, deep sigh, all these hateful appearances went; with the words, "My Nest!" uttered from the very depths of an overburdened heart, all passion seemed to vanish; an indescribable fullness of happiness lit up his eyes, played round his mouth; his strong, nervous hand grasped that slender waist, with an air that seemed to say, "Not death shall part us!"

But he said nothing.

And the slender fair thing by his side, in her dark travelling dress; the little white collar, marking out the slender throat; the veil fallen

from the force of her husband's resistless grasp, and showing the small head, so faultless in its contour, so youthful in its short, thick curls, giving the appearance of a cherub's face more strongly than ever. What a picture did they make, as the strong lamp-light fell full upon them; her eyes shining out, so large and dark, but clear as an angel's soul. And his, so radiant, in full, rejoicing love! The eyes of the three that looked on them, quailed and bent before the beauty of their appearance, the sanctity of their happiness.

"Pray, Lady Gomer," said Lady Jane, at last, in a confused and irrated tone, "may I ask how long you had been playing the part of eaves-dropper?"

"Longer than either you or I could have liked, Lady Jane," said Nest quietly.

"My Nest," said Frank again, as if irresistibly compelled to do so, on hearing the sounds of her sweet voice.

Lady Jane gave a short scornful laugh, which

was meant to express a great deal. But Frank was past feeling any thing, save intense happiness; and the relief was so great, that he ashed no questions, said nothing; he merely clasped the slender waist tighter, and kissed the little fingers more vehemently.

"I suppose, Lord Gomer, you do not intend sitting there all the evening, playing the fool. You seem to forget that we have guests in the next room," she said, at last.

"I have no guests," said Frank.

"I had better go and tell them, then, that you cannot come to pay them the proper courtesy of host, because the dear wife and baby have arrived."

"Pray do, mother."

Lady Jane looked at him in amazement, and with a pang in her heart, felt, that not even her gibes could upset his happiness.

"If you think I can appear in this dress," said Nest, "let us go together into the next room."

"No, my Nest, there is not a person in the room fit for you to associate with."

"This before me, Lord Gomer!" said Lady Jane, in a passionate burst.

"My wife is not going to appear among such people, I can assure you, mother. However, I will go in, and make my own excuses; and if you will retire, my Nest, I will not be long in joining you. Keep my boy awake, that I may see him."

Lady Jane saw her son, with the ease and careless grace of a happy, contented spirit, do the honours of his house with the true nobility of his nature; while her guests, surprised in their turn, at the change in their heretofore morose and irritable host, accepted his apologies for leaving them, in the frank spirit in which they were given.

As the door closed upon her son, Lady Jane's last hope of influencing him to obey her will and behests, fled from her heart.

They had much to tell, the young husband

and wife; in the short few weeks they had been separated, mischief had been done, that might have blighted their life-time. But it was not in demanding explanations, and in satisfying himself how much he had erred, that Frank spent his time. No, it was enough for him that Nest was there, that he could look down into the depths of those lovely eyes, that she sat on his knee, and the baby too, while she explained all his manifold attractions and accomplishments.

He saw at a glance, that evil hands had been at work, trying to separate them. He was too happy to care who did it, or what they wanted to do. He was too generous in mind to wish to ferret out any thing to the detriment of anybody. He had all he wanted near him, and had no time now to admit of annoyances in any way.

But Nest had to tell him of Mimi; and while they mourned together over her rashness, Frank thanked God in his heart, that

Nest had not arrived too late to save him. And he kissed and blessed her, for all she had done for Mimi, saying how comforted and relieved he was, that she had so settled it. For look which ever way they would, it could be but a bad business after all.

Nest knew he would feel deeply hurt, but she wisely let the first feelings of indignation depart, ere she pointed out any comfort. Then she had to tell him of her own sad grief; and if indignation could have entered her heart at such a moment, she must have felt it, when she remembered that Lady Jane had been the cause, not only of her leaving her grandmother, but depriving her of the soothing comfort of Frank's words and presence. If she had been his own Nest, Frank could hardly have felt more at hearing of her illness, and his warm, loving sympathy went like balm to Nest's harassed heart.

They agreed that until the guests were gone, Nest, under plea of seeing no one until she

could hear further news from her grandmother, should not appear. Frank should go the next morning to Nairn, to consult the Duke about Mimi, as they felt sure Lady Jane would not permit her to remain with the Dowager Lady Gomer. And Nest was to take upon herself the task of telling Lady Jane what had been done.

CHAPTER XXII.

Nest sent, after breakfast, a message to Lady Jane, asking an interview. Whether her conscience smote her, or she was determined to be disagreeable, the answer returned was, that she was engaged. Her night's cogitations had by no means improved Lady Jane's feelings towards her daughter-in-law. Just too, as all her plans had come to a good head—just as her son was beginning to fall into the snare—just as every thing was succeeding to her wishes, all to be overthrown by merely the fact of her appearances. No words, no explanation, no anything.

This, though beneficial in reality to Lady Jane's truth and honour, gave her a fatal insight as to the power Nest had over her husband; and that she could endure the sight of one who had injured her so greatly, was not to be thought of, even though she came to resign the rule of Gomer in her favour.

A knock at the door interrupted her hasty, irritable walk to and fro across the room.

"Lady Gomer's compliments, and she would like to know when Lady Jane would be disengaged?"

"Never, to her!" said Lady Jane, angrily; forgetting her usual reserved, proud manner.

But Nest, herself, appeared in the door-way.

"I must speak to you, madam, sometime, and I pray it may be now."

It was no less strange than true, that Nest had never been in Lady Jane's apartments. She paused on the threshold, struck with the beauty and superb decorations of the room.

The walls were hung with an Indian paper of a rich, creamy ground, on which were pourtrayed, in gorgeous beauty, all the birds and flowers of an Indian clime, in their natural hues and size. To tone down the bright and glowing colours, the curtains were composed of the darkest green velvet, with broad borders of embroidered flowers, matching those on the paper in shape and size. The carpet was white, thick and velvety, with golden scrolls, tied together with the same kind of Indian flowers.

But the ornaments of the room were matchless in beauty and value, comprising every description of Indian skill and ingenuity.

The sofas had carved ivory legs; the chairs were inlaid with mother-of-pearl; the tables were malachite, white marble, and ornamented with borders of jaspers, lapis lazulis, and other stones more precious; screens of matchless Indian embroidery, were supported on stems of filagreed silver; while jars of fabulous size, and extraordinary beauty, supported old Indian

cabinets, rare bronze figures, marble statues and objects of vertù.

The room was large and lofty; a magnificent bay-window in the centre, permitted floods of light to pour in, and penetrate each corner of the apartment.

"You seem to envy me the possession of this one poor room in the house," said Lady Jane, as Nest continued to gaze.

"Did I covet, madam, all I admire, I should be a miserable woman. The possession of this room, beautiful as it is, would afford me no pleasure, if another were rendered unhappy thereby"

"I am not to be deceived by canting sayings, and seemingly moral sentiments," said Lady Jane, sneeringly.

Without taking further notice either of her words or the room, Nest advanced, and said—

"I wish to speak with you about Mimi."

Glad of a legitimate excuse on which to pour forth the angry feelings smothering within her,

Lady Jane rushed headlong into a passion, which, though it paled the cheek of her auditor, by its violence, and made her shrink at the coarseness of the language, failed to produce any other effect.

Nest remained silent and motionless, until exhaustion caused Lady Jane to pause.

"Lord Gomer," she then said, "judging that such would be your feelings, and that you would, as you have now said, never speak to, or see his sister more, has requested me to tell you, that he is gone to Nairn, to make arrangements with the Duke about the care and custody of Mimi, until she is of age. I have further to tell you, that she is now at Laurel Grove; and they will probably think it expedient to let her remain with her grandmother, who is willing to keep her."

Lady Jane felt choking. Of all the arrangements that could have been made, nothing could have galled her like this. As soon as she could speak, spite of every contradiction,

she declared, if she did it with her own hands, she would drag her daughter from that hated woman's care; and was proceeding to ring the bell, to put her threat into execution, when Nest stopped her. In the hurry and fury of her actions, and her endeavours to avoid her daughter-in-law's touch, she fell against a small jasper table, on which was a large and beautiful box, made of malachite, and bound together with chaste bands of gold.

It fell, and the force with which it came down, burst open the lid, for the thick nature of the carpet prevented anything like a crash.

Lady Jane sprang to the box, and tried to cover its contents, while she exclaimed wildly, "Go, go; how dare you spy into my concerns? you have done this purposely."

Nest turned away, as she said, "Pray shut your box, for I have other things to say; and one is, that it is useless your endeavouring to reclaim your daughter. Rather than return here, she prefers swearing before a magistrate

that you have ill-treated her. She will detail facts about you and Miss Croft, that will warrant her seeking other protection. Besides, her husband might interfere."

It was painful, it was pitiable, to see Lady Jane, as she rose from the floor, after hiding her box and its contents. Nest could not bear it; so she quickly added, in a low but distinct voice—

"And now, madam, I wish to speak about myself. You, doubtless, feel as I do, that the same house cannot hold us both. I would willingly yield you the possession of Gomer, but that my husband's duty requires his presence on his own estate, and among his own people. My duty and affection belong, of course, to him. Your house of Kirkly is now ready."

"It is not; and even if it was, do you suppose I would live in so small a place? demean myself to inhabit such a house?" said Lady Jane; for she was like a ship without a rudder,

and in her passionate rage, cared for nothing that she might now say.

"I think you are mistaken, madam; the sums laid out upon it, at your request, to make it all you could wish, have been so large, that it is deemed fortunate for Lord Gomer, that his Welsh estates are so lucrative. I believe you have been made fully aware, that large inroads have been made in his income, during the last two years; solely, in fact, by your orders."

"Insolent, audacious girl!" gasped Lady Jane.

"It is useless to hide anything from each other, for we must by this time know that the same house will not hold us. Lord Gomer has ever paid you the deference and respect of a son, and would not now so far forget his relationship to you, by ordering you out of his house. But with me it is different; you will not grant me the permission to be the daughter I would wish; I, therefore, owe you neither

duty nor affection. And after the wicked and base act of trying to separate me from my husband, I feel no compunction in saying, that by this day week, you must remove to your own house."

"God of heaven, support me! what language is this! what insolence! Do you dare to suppose I will be dictated to by a baby girl, an impertinent, foolish girl? Begone! leave my room, leave my presence. God defend me! I shall expire with rage."

Truly, to a spectator, the sight was wonderful; the magnificent proportions, the grand, stately beauty of Lady Jane, all swelling into double size, from rage and indignation, yet cowering before that slight figure, that fair, girlish face, so still, so gentle, so full of pitying grace; but the glorious eyes looked full and strong upon Lady Jane: they said plainly, "It shall be as I have said."

Nest felt that upon this interview, depended her own and her husband's future happiness.

Whatever compassion she might feel, was lost, in the stern determination, that she must hold to her purpose.

"Nay," said Nest, "be less angry. See this packet of letters; do you suppose I could live with you, knowing that you sent them to me?"

"How do you know I sent them?" said Lady Jane, her cheek flushing.

"The seal with which they were fastened, lies there, under that chair; it fell out of the malachite box."

"Absurd!" said Lady Jane, as she stooped hastily to pick it up, and concealed it in her pocket. "You must have some better ground to go upon, ere you accuse me of such things."

"Then I will show the letters to my husband," said Nest quietly.

"Odious girl!" said Lady Jane, "odious, hateful girl!" and she snatched the letters from Nest, throwing them into the fire.

At this moment, a servant entered, announcing the coming of the Duke of Nairn and Lord Gomer.

"How do you do, Nest?" said the Duke; "looking very well, I see. What is this burning so merrily?"

He advanced, as if to take the packet of letters off the fire.

"Do not, I command you; let it alone," said Lady Jane.

"But my curiosity—" persisted the Duke.

"For Lady Gomer's sake, you had better not," said Lady Jane, hurriedly.

"Is it so, Nest?" said he, holding the packet, nearly safe from injury, in the tongs.

Nest looked at the agony in Lady Jane's face.

"Pray let them burn," she said simply, "they are of little consequence to any one."

Lady Jane watched their destruction with eager, elated eyes.

"There," she said, as nothing remained but

a heap of cinders, "you may be easy now, Lady Gomer; I would not, for worlds, that any other eyes than mine, should have seen such letters."

"Why?" said Frank, hot and angry.

Nest linked her arm in his, and rested her child-like head against his shoulder, in a confiding, graceful attitude, peculiarly her own.

A gleam of exultation shot from Lady Jane's eyes. Once more she grasped the hope of success, and it was not in her nature to forego it. Truth, honour, principle, what were they in comparison to revenge? No, everything should be sacrificed; the last whisper of her good angel, the last spark of rectitude within her. Let it cost her a soul, she would see that young, but proud head, lowered—those clear, searching eyes sink in confusion. What if her son's happiness was perilled in the matter? revenge, revenge, was all she cared for.

"Do you ask me why, Frank?" said she,

gently. "Alas! they too fully confirmed all the fears I detailed to you last night."

"Why did you let them burn, Nest?" said Frank, looking at her with a troubled eye.

"They were of no consequence, Frank; they had nothing to do with what she is saying."

"But they were; they were of vital importance to my son's happiness. I am not the sort of mother to stand by, and see a beloved son cajoled and deceived by hypocritical cant. No, Augusta! (calling her from another room,) before the Duke of Nairn, who shall be judge, I will expose him, the victim he is. My poor Augusta, you have been again weeping; is it not for your husband's desertion? his infatuated love for another woman?"

Augusta faintly assented, covering her face with her handkerchief, while she sank into a chair. Frank's eyes began to glare.

"If I were you, I would not weep, Augusta. I should think Sir John's vagaries are pretty

well known by you, ere this," said the Duke, drily.

"Shame! shame!" said Lady Jane, in virtuous indignation. "Duke, how can you jest on such a matter, so vitally important to my two beloved children? My injured Augusta is but too well aware, Sir John has been for the last month in Wales, in attendance upon Lady Gomer."

"Horrid, deceiving girl!" said Augusta, angrily looking at Nest, from behind her handkerchief.

"Is this true, Nest?" said the Duke, while Frank angrily exclaimed,

"It is a shameless lie!"

"It may be true," said Nest, quietly pressing her husband's arm, "that Sir John is in Wales, but it is not true he has been with me."

"Wicked assertion!" said Lady Jane. "Sir John's letters have been full of Lady Gomer, detailing the walks they took, the conversations they had. In fact, Lady Gomer, either infatu-

ated by him, or wrapt up, as she would fain persuade us, by attentions to a baby, forgot her husband altogether, and he only heard news of her, through Sir John."

"You know, mother, that is not true; she wrote daily to me, though what became of the letters no one knows."

"I do, Frank," began Nest.

But Lady Jane hastily interrupted her. "And now, through great exertion on my part, for my son's sake, I had discovered a clue to this matter, she beseeches me to burn the letters, that would fully corroborate the whole matter."

"Wicked, horrid girl!" again said Augusta.

"Lady Jane," said Nest, raising herself from her husband's arm, with a kind of lofty disdain in her countenance, "pray pause ere you go further. You cannot make mischief between your son and me, for he relies upon me, as I rely upon him, despite of every cabal against us. Pray pause; you know not if I may not have reserved some

of those letters; they may not all have been burnt."

Lady Jane's lips grew white, and she trembled, as Nest, turning to Augusta, said,—

"As far as I am concerned, Augusta, pray do not be uneasy about your husband. I am conscious that some one did follow my steps when I walked out at Coadmore, though I never spoke to the person, and am not aware who it was. I confined myself to the house, to avoid the annoyance; but as for Sir John West, excuse my saying he is so utterly indifferent to me, that I take no interest in him whatever, save that he is your husband."

"As if we can believe such nonsense! as if it were possible to doubt the evidence of his devotion to you, in our presence!" said Lady Jane.

"Pray, madam, spare me such inuendoes; think what you like, if it so please you, but pollute not my ears with the utterance of such ideas," said Nest, haughtily.

"If Lord Gomer is not more blind and infatuated than the greatest fool on earth, he would see through your shallow artifices and mock virtue."

"Nest," said Frank, "you said you knew what had become of your letters. Oh! relieve my mind; ease my aching heart."

Nest looked round at her husband, with perhaps a somewhat mournful look in her eyes, while the Duke exclaimed—

"I would rather be the accused, than the accuser; the former may be innocent, but the latter must be black in heart. Come, Lady Jane, give up this charge; you know that it cannot be substantiated."

"Not substantiated! not proved!" said Lady Jane, with loud, triumphant voice; "I defy her to contradict it."

"Madam, I cannot contradict that of which I know nothing, and understand less. But I beseech you pause, ere you go further."

"Oh! Nest," said Frank, with mournful pathos.

"Generous, high-hearted Nest," said the Duke; "but waste no further words, it is useless; you cannot change that nature."

"Nothing shall make me pause," said Lady Jane; "for my son's sake, I will convict you."

"Then farewell, madam. The sooner you leave this house, the better; for now we are henceforward strangers. The letters that are burnt were anonymous ones, sent me while at Coadmore. Sent, Frank," she continued, as she looked up with loving confidence in his face, "to make me unhappy about you; saying things I did not like to read, knowing how untrue they were. Sent, Frank, to make me unhappy about Miss West—and I was unhappy for her. I did not tell you of them, because they were of no moment, with things in them I would not have had you see, for the poor girl's sake. I wished

them burnt, and am glad they are so. My letters to you are in that green box, behind the screen."

So saying, she curtsied slightly, and left the room. Deep, burning blushes coursed each other over Frank's face. Lady Jane grew livid, and tried to grasp her box; but it was already in the Duke's possession.

Emptying it of its contents, he returned it to her, and placing the different packets in Frank's hand, he said—

"Well now, Lady Jane, that fine scheme having failed, we will think no more about it; but I will tell you what Frank and I have settled about Mimi, for we met on the road this morning, and I came back with him—rather inopportunely, I should conceive, by your face," said he, maliciously.

"I will hear nothing about that girl," gasped Lady Jane.

"Ah! very good, very well, we thought so;

therefore we have arranged the whole matter. Come, Frank, let us go, we need trouble your mother no longer; I think she would be glad to be left alone now."

Lady Jane felt her brain on fire; her heart bursting. Feeling that if she had to endure any more commotion, her reason would give way, she hastily swallowed a strong narcotic, and for two days was invisible.

On the third, Nest heard the expected, but dreaded news, her beloved grandmother was no more! Anxious as she felt to accompany her husband to pay her last duties to her loved remains, Nest could not leave her baby. So, during this time of permitted sorrow and grief, she went to Laurel Grove with the child.

Frank asked permission to see his mother before he went, and in calm, but determined language, plainly said, "He hoped to find her comfortably settled at Kirkly, ere he returned from his painful duties at Coadmore."

The guests all departed, leaving the castle solely inhabited by Lady Jane and Mr. Malcolm, Lady and Miss West.

Nest and the baby had an enthusiastic reception at Laurel Grove, which, tempered by the loving sympathy they expressed, for the grief she was in, was balm and peace to her. The delight of the little grandmother, the subdued, quiet, heartfelt joy of Mimi, penetrated Nest's harassed heart, like sunshine. Lady Jane had received her son's parting intimation in sullen silence; but there arose in her heart a stern resolve. They might carry her out in her coffin; alive, she would never leave Gomer!

Nevertheless, she was no match for the Duke; for about three days after her allotted time for moving was over, as she was returning from an airing in her carriage and four, Lady and Miss West with her, being then about six miles from Gomer, the carriage stopped, and Mr. Stewart presented himself.

"My leddy, a bit note, from his Grace."

Lady Jane opened it, all unwotting of the contents.

"DEAR LADY JANE,

"Your time for leaving having expired, and orders having been issued to see that you go, I think it prudent, as a friend, to give you notice, that the gates of Gomer are closed, locked, and shut against you! And, if you will take my advice, to avoid a painful, and what must necessarily be a degrading scene, turn your horses' heads to Kirkly, as if you intended going there, and make no attempt to force an entrance.

"Believe me,

"Your sincere adviser and relative,

"NAIRN."

"No answer," said Lady Jane, haughtily, to Mr. Stewart; "drive on."

"Whaar to, my leddy?"

"To Gomer; begone, man! and do not interfere with what does not concern you."

It would be useless to depict the scene that followed; degrading, mortifying, and bitter, as the Duke feared the scene would be, and which, in his kindness, he meant to spare her, it was much worse than he had conceived possible. The angry excitement of the Lady Jane; the delight with which the people viewed her discomfiture; her imperious orders, given with such pride of word and voice, so impotent in reality, nay, laughed at. Her determination to sit in the carriage, at the locked gates, until from shame she was admitted; the bitter jests and scoffs that were hurled at her, finally exciting her almost to madness. Until at last, holding her forcibly down, Augusta and Miss West, unable to endure their horrible situation longer, ordered the servants to drive to Kirkly, in spite of Lady Jane's cries, where, exhausted, mortified, wearied, and distressed, they arrived, at ten o'clock.

Lady Jane was conveyed, in stupid despair, to bed; all unknowing that Mr. Malcolm and her whole establishment were waiting to receive her.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Six months had come and gone; six months of entire, unmitigated happiness to Frank and Nest; six months of quiet, peace, and thought to Mimi; six months of wondrous growth and beauty to the baby; six months of prosperity and happiness to the people of Gomer, such as they had never before experienced.

But it was six months of woe and grief to Lady Jane; six months of sin and wickedness to Augusta. Her name could now no longer be mentioned; in sorrowful whispers they spoke

of her at Gomer; in pitying mercy, secret efforts were made to save her.

But the effects of her conduct, had brought her son and Lady Jane once more into contact. He was too happy to think of the past, and she met him in much the same style as she usually did, when meeting at breakfast in the morning, at Gomer.

She and Nest, though within twenty miles of each other, were still estranged; they had never met since that memorable day.

Mr. Clifford's heart expanded with joy and gratitude; his church was filled by an attentive, listening congregation; his schools were thronged by eager, industrious children; his people looked smiling and happy; every cottage was a rural picture of neatness and comfort.

The ill-disposed, finding that nothing was to be gained by remaining longer at Gomer,

removed to Kirkly, while none, who felt disposed to work, wanted.

Frank and Nest were beginning to build a St. John's palace in truth, and as they built, so did their happiness and prosperity increase. Nest had been presented, and gained as much admiration as the Principessa d'Arubino could desire. They took a moderate dose of the pleasures of London, and returned with increased delight to their country duties.

The windows of the sweet summer parlour at Nairn are wide open; the humming of the bees, the sweet warbling of the birds, fill it with sound. The fragrant breath of the clover is wafted in with the gentle summer breeze. Without, the lovely prospect is bathed in golden beauty; the quiet deer, beneath the trees, lazily flaps the flies away; all breathes peace and happiness, all but one face in that summer parlour.

"What a sigh, my son," said the Duchess.

"Did I sigh, mother?"

"Yes, a heavy heart-sigh. My son, you are not happy, you have not been so for some time."

"Do you think so, my dear mother?" said the Duke, listlessly.

"Another sigh, Elmore. Do you know, son, you are making your mother unhappy?"

"God love you, dearest mother, I would not do that. But come, I will get out of my mopes; I want to ask you a favour."

"But before you ask me, can you, without annoyance, tell me what you were thinking so deeply about?" said his mother.

"Yes, I have no objection to tell you, mother. It was a vision I saw, or perhaps a dream I had, that while it pleased me with its beauty and heavenly happiness, gave me a pang; a pang I don't often feel, mother, so it stung the more. A pang of envy, of coveting; as Stewart says, I think it hustled against the tenth command-ment, somehow."

"What was it, my son?" as he paused, said the Duchess.

"Methought, (for it might be a dream, mother,) I was in a fair and lovely spot, bounded by noble trees, sweeping to the ground, and sloping towards a tranquil fairy lake. On one side was a cottage, a bower of roses and beauty, on all sides I saw clusters, and banks and beds, and masses of roses, and the air was heavy with the scent thereof.

"Among these roses, gathering their fragrant leaves, was a girl, very young, for her hair fell all curling, in heavy masses, on her shoulders, (making her look not above fifteen), very lovely, for her face was matchless, her form beautiful, and she sang heart's music, thrilling forth irrepressible joy of spirit; and as she sang, all unknowing to her, one came behind her, who sportively gathered roses and sprinkled them over her. At first, she was unconscious; but suddenly she turned, uttered a glad cry, and those two met, mother, as if one heart was be-

tween them. Then, though so young and girlish, I saw her soul speaking out of her eyes, showing that a pure, high, holy, spirit dwelt there. Then they sported together in very happiness, until the ground was strewn with roses. Afterwards she ran to the cottage, and brought out a fair noble boy, who grasped her dark curls in his fat rosy fingers, and shouted with glee, as she laid him in his father's arms."

"My son, you have been to Gomer."

"Yes, mother, but I did not interrupt this happiness; I returned home without showing myself, and what made me grave, mother, is, that in the quiet ride home, I took, as I once did before, my heart out of my bosom, and there is a black, hideous speck in it. So, mother, grant my request."

"My son, my son, how can I live without you?"

"Parliament is over, business is slack, there is nothing to be done. Mother, you must let me go; give me six months' leave of absence

from your side. I do not know myself if I return uncured."

"You must go, my son, alas! alas! I knew it."

"You must have Frederick, with his nice merry little wife, and all their fat, cosy, good children, to keep you company, and I will perhaps bring you home a magnificent, stately, dark, Spanish daughter-in-law; or a fine, fat, fair, German girl; or a handsome Russian; perhaps a sleepy-eyed Turk; a long, dark-haired Greek; may be a silent, gentle, enduring squaw, with eyes like liquid night, deep and fathomless. Thanks, mother, dearest, sweetest mother, I see you will let me go; you think it best. I could blush, weep, and wail over my black spot, but God gave me a heart to worship what is good, noble, beautiful, and I must depart, to cure myself, of the rust of earth. If I fail to find happiness of one kind, it will be happiness to me to make you so, my mother. But we will keep our own secret; let us tell no one;

I hate leave-takings; besides, I make no doubt if Stewart 'heard tell o' such a spree,' he would say, 'His Grace has a bee in his bonnet, and mun be pit under law-fu bands,' and then he would lock me up, forthwith."

CHAPTER XXIV.

"WELL! good people, how are you? I am going from home on a little bit of private business, and I called to say good-bye."

Thus spoke the Duke to the party assembled in the rose-garden, consisting of Frank, Nest, Mimi, and the good little grandmother.

"Oh, dear! we hope it is not for long; we hope you are not going far; we cannot spare you, indeed." Such was the greeting his announcement received.

"Cannot say, indeed! Private business is,

in general, so exacting, and takes one to such unheard-of places."

"Nonsense!" said Mimi, "you are only joking; we won't let you go, for we cannot spare you."

"Very fine, indeed, Mimi, pretending such an interest in me! when you know, spite of all your mother's kind efforts, instead of accepting my intended proposals, you preferred—"

"Hush, hush! oh, Elmore, don't," said Mimi, flying off behind a rose-tree.

"I hope, as Mimi does," said Nest, "that you are not really going away. You cannot have private business, you know," she continued, archly; "for we are just as much concerned as you, in whatever occurs at Nairn."

"Are you?" he said, abstractedly, while he looked stedfastly into her eyes.

"Yes," said Nest, blushing at his fixed gaze; "and, besides, we have private business for you. Everybody is bent on spoiling your

god-son; and as no order is ever paid any attention to, except what you give, if you don't wish to see him ruined, you must stay to watch over him."

"But what is your private business?" said Frank.

"Why, I see you here, so happy and comfortable, with an amiable wife, and such a magnificent boy; that Stewart has ordered me off, to look for two precisely similar."

"That you will never get!" said the little grandmother, quite indignant, and taking him literally. "Another Pearl! ah, hem! indeed! find me another Pearl! and, and—yes, really, I'll go and speak to Lady Jane. I'll call her, 'My dear Jane.' There now, what can be more improbable than that? For, though I bear no malice, I have sworn I never would, and I won't, though I am the happiest little old woman in the world!"

"My dear madam, *I* never said so!" said the Duke, with a profound apologetical bow;

"on the contrary, I quite agree with you; baby and mother, they are matchless!"

"Oh! Elmore, don't marry," said Mimi, behind her bush; "you are ours; you belong to us. I should hate to see you with a wife!"

"Ah! my dear, you are too late; you have done for yourself, otherwise you might have loved the Duchess of Nairn quite as much as you love Mimi Gomer."

"Oh! cousin, don't be so unkind. Nest, do you scold him; don't let him marry."

"I think you are only joking," said Nest, smiling; "but I cannot fancy you married. As Mimi says, you belong to us; we cannot spare you, even to a wife!"

"Ah! if I obey Stewart, and the dear grandmother's words are true, I dare say I shall not afflict you. I'll take care, however, that she has a large heart, to take you all in. But, Frank, I want a few words with you."

What passed between them, was never

known; but from the hour of the Duke's departure, Frank looked at, thought of, cared for his lovely wife, as a miser cares for his treasure; and while others wondered at Elmore's prolonged absence, as months flew by, and he did not return, Frank said nothing, but looked unutterably.

CHAPTER XXV.

TIME passed on. Mimi's year of probation was nearly over. During all this time, the name of Hugh had never passed her lips; she had held no communication with him, or he with her; they might have been as dead to each other.

So little was known of her history, that though it was bruited about, she had left her mother, and gone to her sister, few knew the real facts, and none wondered at her choice. She, therefore, went about in society as Miss Gomer. It was Frank's wish that she should

enter into every gaiety, take her place, choose her associates, and become thoroughly acquainted with the world and its ways.

Her kind little grandmother devoted herself entirely to her; spared no expense and no trouble; Mimi had, therefore, ample opportunities of judging what might have been her fate, and to decide which it should be.

Lady Jane was on very good terms with her son; had met Nest once or twice in society, and behaved to her as a highly-bred, fashionable mother-in-law might be supposed to do; never, by look or word, took the slightest notice of her daughter, which people considered a loss on Lady Jane's part; for Mimi was very much admired and liked.

The Duke was in Spain, and his letters home were not only very amusing, but remarkably lively and cheerful.

"I am so happy, and so much amused, my dear mother, that now you have let me loose

from your apron-strings, I don't intend to come home in a hurry. Tell Stewart I'll bring him home some genu-ine snuff, to console him; and if you lay a proper stress upon the last syllable, it will prepare him for hearing of me, as a thorough-bred Yankee. For having my erratic boots on, mother, I have a mind to see extremes, ere I see you again. I can conceive none more so than a grandee of Spain, and a 'go-a-head catawampous screamer.'

"There is, really, something very fine in the character of the old Spanish noble. To be sure, he carries his ideas of etiquette and punctilio to an alarming degree, and the noble old race is dwindling away fast, under the pressure of such bands. They are so fearful of tainting their pure blood with an admixture of a more ignoble nature, that absolutely I can hide the premier Duke of the grandees of Spain almost in my hat. Low be it spoken, of such a precious morsel of humanity, with reverence be it remarked of the case that holds such match-

less drops of blood; but, by my faith! I thought, to look at him, he was a remarkably pleasant, courteous baboon.

"But, however the race may have degenerated in size, from their endeavours to keep it intact, their pride of birth and haughtiness of carriage seem to increase, I presume from the rule, that essences are more powerful than the substances from which they are derived; and therefore these little morsels of nobility bear themselves as if the world contained no grander objects. In truth, their souls are large enough for bulkier frames; but Nature, so true in most things, hath, as regards humanity, almost invariably allotted a bellicose soul to a little person, while the spirit of a mouse inhabits a 'Gog.'

"I find, my dear mother, travelling is as good for the mind, as body. Certainly, you meet with discomforts, but that does you good in the end, for you relish what before you regarded not. I met an old Englishman the

other day, hurrying home, after having done a tour.

"'Well, my dear sir,' said I, 'and what have you most admired in your travels?'

"'I only came abroad for one thing,' growled he, in John Bull fashion, 'and that was, to enjoy going home again.'

"I bowed in courtesy to such strength of mind, and discernment of character. If I had not left your apron-strings, my dear mother, I should not have met with this enlightened Englishman.

"'Tis said, 'Travellers meet with strange bed-fellows.' By-the-bye, travelling in Spain, 'tis better not to go bed at all. From whence come such myriads of lively, insatiable, restless armies of night assailants, I know not; but, certainly, in Spain, the Arabian proverb, 'The flea saith, "Man was created for me!"' stands a lively truth. I infinitely prefer sleeping with my mule; and though one's strange bed-fellow may now and then kick one out of bed, that

is better than being devoured in minute particles. But to eschew such company. I return to my original remark, that travelling is good for the soul. The other day, I met in a little town with an unspellable name, at a posada of most questionable appearance, two or three officers, who, quartered at Gibraltar, had ventured over to the main land, in quest of amusement and adventures. Among them, I recognised young Hill, who did me the honour of mistaking me for his quondam brother officer, my brother Fred. He paid us both the compliment of saying, he did not think there could be such another specimen of the ancient race of Britons, as he deemed Fred.; which, my dear mother, I tell you, knowing well what gullibility you possess, when your maternal vanity is concerned. Certainly, as regards flesh and bone, in butcher's language, 'there is plenty of us;' and, in this instance, it seemed my appearance was a source of much gratification to the young officers.

They had come provided with every requisite to spend some days in Spain, bringing their own food and servants; but, alas! not their own beds. Poor souls!

"They had been a day or two in this little town, and perceiving that the fashion of the place, as regards invitations to a ball and supper, was merely to place two or three candles in a window, and hire a couple of fiddles; they had the evening before, collected a goodly show of the *élite* of the place. For some time, all went on very well; but, like all foolish young men, having been too liberal with their wine, a row had ensued, which ended in the whole of the guests being marched off to prison. Not exactly understanding what awful threats were to be fulfilled on the giddy pates of the young officers, they were anxious to get out of the town as soon as possible, and hailed me with great delight, for this reason.

"They had determined to proceed to Rhonda, to attend a curious fair there, at which, in

general, there are celebrated bull-fights. But the road thereto, eighteen leagues, was infested by banditti, and the guides would not accompany them, without a goodly supply of valiant hearts, and warlike hands. I completed the number requisite, and forthwith we started.

"Now, my dear mother, imagine not that I was ambitious of seeing bull-fights, or, like any boy, anxious for a brush with the banditti. Our adventures I will premise, for your sake, were more ludicrous than dangerous.

"We jogged on, for the first few miles, imagining a bandit behind every stone. The country was most picturesque and beautiful, though I cannot say I admire, *en masse*, the green of the cork-trees. I like variety, and wished often to relieve my eye with the fair shadowing green of the spring-touched larch, and still more often for the dark, storm-clad firs of Scotland. There was no variety, nothing but rich luxuriousness in the colouring of the landscape; and there was no escape from the

glare of the sun over-head. We had travelled about half way, becoming, like all Englishmen, careless and easy, straggling here and there; when I saw Hill, who was in advance, suddenly stop, and a suspicious movement towards the holsters of his pistols, made me hasten my mule.

"A magnificent Spanish fellow, upwards of six feet high, but light and active, had hold of his bridle rein. The gleam of his white teeth, showed that, whether bandit or not, he was inclined to be facetious.

"He was dressed in the gayest, most fantastic colours, in the true Andalusian garb, with rings, chains, and watches on every available finger, ears, and button-hole.

"'This gentleman,' said Hill to me, as I rode up, 'declares he has an irresistible longing to be possessed of my watch.'

'"Señor,' said I, courteously pointing to his, 'you have enough.'

"'I yet want two more,' retorted he, with a

haughty sweep of the arm, that seemed to say, 'I am exceedingly condescending, to ask for, instead of take them.'

"Of course the conversation was in Spanish.

"'Señor,' said Hill, 'you may want, but you do not take mine;' and he drew forth his pistol.

"'Behold!' said the gay cavalier, pointing with the utmost grandeur towards the wood, from whence we beheld about a dozen other fellows, springing forward.

"'I behold,' said Hill; 'but pray what difference does it make to me?'

"'The Señores will deliver up their watches to me; and those gentlemen there, are a little in want of money; the Señores will doubtless supply them.'

"'The Señores will supply them with a few bullets, but with nothing else.'

Again the handsome Spaniard showed the

gleam of his teeth, smiling in scorn, as we were surrounded by his gang.

"'Señor,' said Hill, 'allow me to ask you,—the august company about me, I presume, are banditti?'

"'Caballeros, Señor.'

"'Oh, ah! that makes all the difference; but still, as I object to parting with my watch to any one, I'll trouble you to "behold," now.'

"Our whole party had by this time appeared in sight. Like magic the banditti disappeared, all except our first friend, who found it impossible to move, with each of us a hand not lightly laid on his shoulder.

"'Come,' said Hill, 'there are but six of us, and a dozen of you; won't you have a fight for my watch, two to one?'

"But our handsome caballero bore a very different aspect, and so far from accepting Hill's generous offer, began to beseech us, for the love of heaven, to release him.

'It being no business of ours to inflict sum-

mary punishment on him, after a show of most abject fear on his part, we released him. He had become too mean an object upon which to waste our time; while he, on his part, having heard several signals from the wood, evidently from his cowardly comrades, was still more urgent in his entreaties that we should depart. We were about to do so, when one of the guides whispered to me—

"'They are anxious we should get on, for they see another party coming up the hill. It is a lady, Señor, accompanied by her maid. They are going up to Rhonda fair. She has four servants to guard her, but they will all fly, at the first sight of the banditti; and the lady will be carried off to the mountains, until she is ransomed.'

"'We must wait then,' said I; and in English I told my companions.

"'Por amor de Dios, Señores,' said our crest-fallen bandit chief, 'move on, move on. Brave

and noble cabaleros, an open path is before you, nothing can stand before such courage.'

"'I am waiting for my wife,' said Hill, looking fixedly at him; 'she is coming up the hill.'

"With a volley of Spanish oaths, and a diabolical look of revenge and disappointment, of which Hill had the full benefit, our brave and handsome friend disappeared. The lady shortly came up, in her litter, carried by two mules.

"Though an utter stranger to us, she soon learnt from her servants, from what we had saved her; kissing our hands, gesticulating, and praying, calling upon innumerable saints, she acted a most moving picture of lively gratitude, which must have been peculiarly gratifying to Señor bandit, if he was looking forth from his concealment.

"So we pursued our journey, in renovated spirits, more than ever convinced of the irresistible nature of British pluck. Hill's adopted

wife proved of great service to us, for her gratitude knew no bounds, and when we arrived at Rhonda, without further adventures, she introduced us to her husband. He went through the same interesting ceremony as his wife had done, kissing our hands, if, during any inadvertent moment, we forgot his propinquity, and calling upon more saints than ever I heard of, to reward us. Not that the lady, from all I could hear, would have received any harm from the Caballeros banditti, but he was saved paying a certain sum of money for her restoration. Who knows, poor fellow! but that his domestic felicity might have been for ever destroyed, had he haggled about the price demanded, or not been willing to disburse even thrice the sum asked?

"He was grateful enough, however, for being saved any fate; and though the town was crammed, and neither love nor money could have procured us a lodging, he managed to secure us

a large, dilapidated old dwelling, that belonged to some Spanish grandee."

"Here we found at least space and air; cleanliness is a word not known in the Spanish Dictionary, so we did as well as we could without it.

"Two old servants, alone, inhabited this vast palace, who, after showing us into one or two dilapidated halls, or saloons, or corridors, vanished, and, I presume, locked themselves up, for we never set eyes on them again. I was not ill-pleased with my lodging; there was a pretty fountain in the room where I had located myself, whose gurgling water not only murmured one to sleep, but gave prospect of some possible means of ablution. Though I have endeavoured, during my travels, to succumb as much as possible to the golden rule, 'When at Rome, do as the Romans do,' there are one or two things my stubborn John Bullism persists in—I must shave, and I must wash, and I cannot smoke. Thus I had my

fountain to myself, and my room, for even those gregarious night marauders had fled from the lone stillness of this deserted palace. I slept in peace, for about the first time I have been in Spain; and my companions under the same roof, having gone to view the bull-fight, I have returned to my cool fountain, out of the glare of the street, and am thus employing myself in chatting to you, my mother. To any other person, I would apologize for this journal; but to you, I only say, I write on, on, if but to say, I love you, mother.

"Tell Mimi, that surrounded by eyes of liquid darkness, hair of the deep night's hue, skins however soft and pure, yet with a tendency to run into shades of yellow, I recall her image very often to my mind, in high admiration. Ah! now, if she only would have waited; in fact, if she saw me now, brooding over her peach-coloured cheeks, violet eyes, and chestnut hair, none of which do you see in

Span, she would, I think, be sorry for the episode of the back-stairs. But I must bend to my sad fate, and think how cruel Fortune has been to me, to give me so many sublunary advantages, and yet suffer me to be snubbed by a page. By the bye, tell Mimi I am in correspondence with a certain Count Orlando, who spent a good deal of his life upon a back-stairs. Really, it must have been a wonderfully improving place, for his letters put mine to the blush. I sent him some account of the machinery used in Spain, and forthwith I had such a learned letter back again, that I was obliged to read up no end of books, to be able even to understand the phrases. Though cut out by him, in one way, thinks I, 'It shall be be my own fault, friend Page, if you prove me an ass in other things.' But, hold! spite of the remembrance of Mimi's blue eyes, I have been aware for the last few minutes, that I have attracted the attention of a remarkably

fine pair of dark ones. Don't think me vain, mother, but she is peeping at me now, unconscious that I can see all she does! I must pursue this little adventure; perhaps Rhonda may bring on the crisis of my fate.

"She beckons to me. There, Mimi! you see dark eyes are less obdurate than blue ones. I presume the young damsel is in distress, and you will be glad to hear, my dear mother, that handsome as many of the Spanish women are, whom I have seen, my heroine bids fair to outshine them all!

"I have obeyed her signs, and held converse with her over the wall, somewhat after the manner of Thisbe and Pyramus. No roaring lion interrupted our interview, however; neither was the wall envious and unkind, for I could lean over it, and by this means discovered my unknown is perfectly beautiful, matchlessly so, I should say, for the dark race, with a rosy hue, instead of a yellow one, running through her brown cheek.

"What she requires of me, I have yet to learn, so I will close this journal, my mother, and anon you shall be favoured with the sequel of this adventure. Ah! Mimi, Mimi! don't you repent now?"

END OF VOL. II.

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